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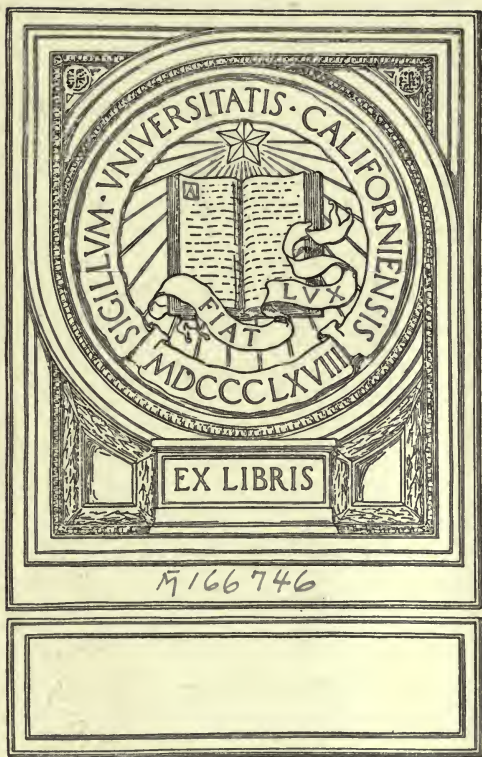
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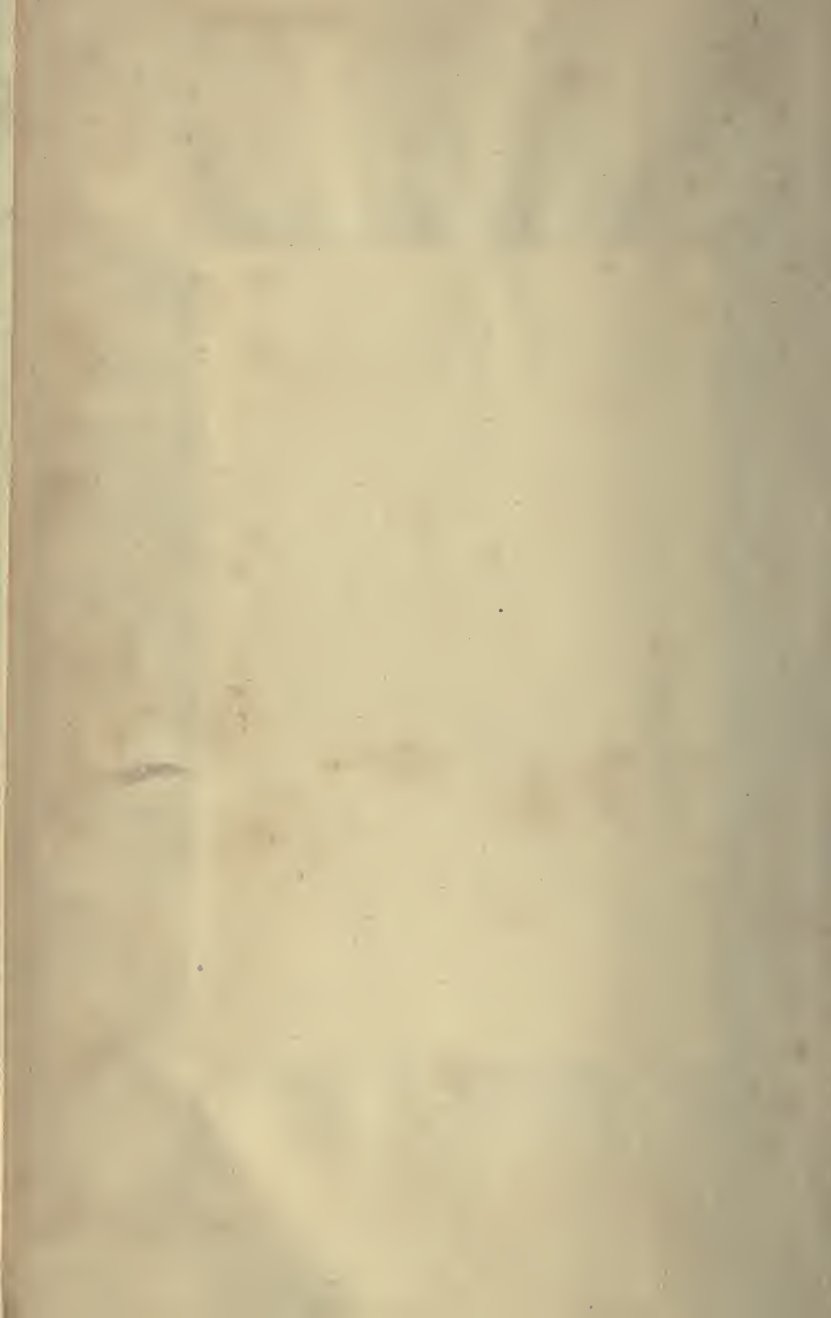
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FOUL PLAY.



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FOUL PLAY.

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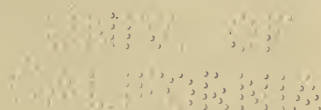
CHARLES READE

AND

DION BOUCICAULT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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1868.

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LONDON :

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NOTICE TO MANAGERS.

A DRAMA entitled "FOUL PLAY" has been written by the Authors of the Story, and produced at the Theatre Royal, Leeds. So that no other person can legally dramatise the Story.

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1901

FOUL PLAY.

CHAPTER I.

THERE are places which appear at first sight inaccessible to romance : and such a place was Mr. Wardlaw's dining room in Russell Square. It was very large, had sickly green walls, picked out with aldermen, full length ; heavy maroon curtains ; mahogany chairs ; a turkey carpet an inch thick : and was lighted with wax candles only.

In the centre, bristling and gleaming with silver and glass, was a round table, at which fourteen could have dined comfortably ; and at opposite sides of this table sat two gentlemen, who looked as neat, grave, precise, and unromantic, as the place : Merchant Wardlaw, and his son.

Wardlaw senior was an elderly man, tall, thin, iron-grey, with a round head, a short thick neck, a

good brown eye, a square jowl that betokened resolution, and a complexion so sallow as to be almost cadaverous. Hard as iron : but a certain stiff dignity and respectability sat upon him, and became him.

Arthur Wardlaw resembled his father in figure, but his mother in face. He had, and has, hay-coloured hair, a forehead singularly white and delicate, pale blue eyes, largish ears, finely chiselled features, the under lip much shorter than the upper ; his chin oval and pretty, but somewhat receding ; his complexion beautiful. In short, what nineteen people out of twenty would call a handsome young man, and think they had described him.

Both the Wardlaws were in full dress, according to the invariable custom of the house ; and sat in a dead silence, that seemed natural to the great, sober room.

This, however, was not for want of a topic ; on the contrary, they had a matter of great importance to discuss, and in fact this was why they dined *tête-à-tête* : but their tongues were tied for the present ; in the first place, there stood in the middle of the table an epergne, the size of a Putney laurel tree ; neither Wardlaw could well see the other, without craning out his neck like a rifleman

from behind his tree: and then there were three live suppressors of confidential intercourse, two gorgeous footmen, and a sombre, sublime, and, in one word, episcopal, butler; all three went about as softly as cats after a robin, and conjured one plate away, and smoothly insinuated another, and seemed models of grave discretion; but were known to be all ears, and bound by a secret oath to carry down each crumb of dialogue to the servants' hall, for curious dissection, and boisterous ridicule.

At last, however, those three smug hypocrites retired, and, by good luck, transferred their suffocating epergne to the sideboard; so then father and son looked at one another with that conscious air which naturally precedes a topic of interest; and Wardlaw senior invited his son to try a certain decanter of rare old port, by way of preliminary.

While the young man fills his glass, hurl we in his antecedents.

At school till fifteen, and then clerk in his father's office till twenty-two, and showed an aptitude so remarkable, that John Wardlaw, who was getting tired, determined, sooner or later, to put the reins of government into his hands. But he conceived a desire that the future head of his office should be

an university man. So he announced his resolution, and to Oxford went young Wardlaw, though he had not looked at Greek or Latin for seven years. He was, however, furnished with a private tutor, under whom he recovered lost ground rapidly. The Reverend Robert Penfold was a first-class man, and had the gift of teaching. The house of Wardlaw had peculiar claims on him, for he was the son of old Michael Penfold, Wardlaw's cashier; he learned from young Wardlaw the stake he was playing for, and, instead of merely giving him one hour's lecture per day, as he did to his other pupils, he used to come to his rooms at all hours, and force him to read, by reading with him. He also stood his friend in a serious emergency. Young Wardlaw, you must know, was blessed, or cursed, with Mimicry; his powers in that way really seemed to have no limit, for he could imitate any sound you liked with his voice, and any form with his pen or pencil. Now, we promise you, he was one man under his father's eye, and another down at Oxford; so, one night, this gentleman, being warm with wine, opens his window, and, seeing a group of undergraduates chattering and smoking in the quadrangle, imitates the peculiar grating tones of Mr.

Champion, vice-president of the college, and gives them various reasons why they ought to disperse to their rooms and study. "But, perhaps," says he, in conclusion, "you are too blind drunk to read Bosh in crooked letters by candle-light? In that case——" And he then gave them some very naughty advice how to pass the evening, still in the exact tones of Mr. Champion, who was a very, very strict moralist; and this unexpected sally of wit caused shrieks of laughter, and mightily tickled all the hearers, except Champion ipse, who was listening, and disapproving, at another window. He complained to the president. Then the ingenious Wardlaw, not having come down to us in a direct line from Bayard, committed a great mistake—he denied it.

It was brought home to him, and the president, who had laughed in his sleeve at the practical joke, looked very grave at the falsehood; Rustication was talked of, and even Expulsion. Then Wardlaw came sorrowfully to Penfold, and said to him, "I must have been awfully cut, for I don't remember all that; I had been wining at Christchurch. I do remember slanging the fellows, but how can I tell what I said? I say, old fellow, it will be a bad job

for me if they expel me, or even rusticate me; my father will never forgive me; I shall be his clerk, but never his partner; and then he will find out what a lot I owe down here. I'm done for! I'm done for!"

Penfold uttered not a word, but grasped his hand, and went off to the president, and said his pupil had wined at Christchurch, and could not be expected to remember minutely. Mimicry was, unfortunately, a habit with him. He then pleaded for the milder construction, with such zeal and eloquence, that the high-minded scholar he was addressing admitted that construction was *possible*, and therefore must be received. So the affair ended in a written apology to Mr. Champion, which had all the smoothness and neatness of a merchant's letter. Arthur Wardlaw was already a master in that style.

Six months after this, and one fortnight before the actual commencement of our tale, Arthur Wardlaw, well crammed by Penfold, went up for his final examination, throbbing with anxiety. He passed; and was so grateful to his tutor that, when the advowson of a small living near Oxford came into the market, he asked Wardlaw senior to lend Robert

Penfold a sum of money, much more than was needed; and Wardlaw senior declined without a moment's hesitation.

This slight sketch will serve as a key to the dialogue it has postponed, and to subsequent incidents.

"Well, Arthur, and so you have really taken your degree?"

"No, sir; but I have passed my examination: the degree follows as a matter of course—that is a mere question of fees."

"Oh, then now I have something to say to you. Try one more glass of the '47 port. Stop; you'll excuse me; I am a man of business; I don't doubt your word; Heaven forbid! but, do you happen to have any document you can produce in further confirmation of what you state; namely, that you have passed your final examination at the University?"

"Certainly, sir;" replied young Wardlaw. "My Testamur."

"What is that?"

The young gentleman put his hand in his pocket, and produced his Testamur, or "We bear witness;" a short printed document in Latin, which may be thus translated:—

" We bear witness that Arthur Wardlaw, of St. Luke's College, has answered our questions in humane letters.

" Geo. Richardson,

" Arthur Smythe,

" Edward Merivale,

Examiners."

Wardlaw senior took it, laid it beside him on the table, inspected it with his double eye-glass, and, not knowing a word of Latin, was mightily impressed, and his respect for his son rose 40, or 45, per cent.

" Very well, sir ;" said he. " Now listen to me. Perhaps it was an old man's fancy ; but I have often seen in the world what a stamp these Universities put upon a man. To send you back from commerce to Latin and Greek, at two-and-twenty, was trying you rather hard ; it was trying you doubly ; your obedience, and your ability into the bargain. Well, sir, you have stood the trial, and I am proud of you. And so now it is my turn : from this day and from this hour, look on yourself as my partner in the old established house of Wardlaw. My balance-sheet shall be prepared immediately, and the partnership deed drawn. You will enter

on a flourishing concern, sir ; and you will virtually conduct it, in written communication with me ; for I have had five-and-forty years of it : and then my liver, you know ! Watson advises me strongly to leave my desk, and try country air, and rest from business and its cares."

He paused a moment ; and the young man drew a long breath, like one who was in the act of being relieved of some terrible weight.

As for the old gentleman, he was not observing his son just then, but thinking of his own career : a certain expression of pain and regret came over his features ; but he shook it off with manly dignity. " Come, come," said he, " this is the law of Nature, and must be submitted to with a good grace. Wardlaw junior, fill your glass." At the same time he stood up and said, stoutly, " The setting sun drinks to the rising sun ;" but could not maintain that artificial style, and ended with, " God bless you, my boy, and may you stick to business ; avoid speculation, as I have done ; and so hand the concern down healthy to your son, as my father there (pointing to a picture) handed it down to me, and I to you."

His voice wavered slightly in uttering this bene-

diction ; but only for a moment : he then sat quietly down, and sipped his wine composedly.

Not so the other : his colour came and went violently all the time his father was speaking, and, when he ceased, he sank into his chair with another sigh deeper than the last, and two half-hysterical tears came to his pale eyes.

But presently, feeling he was expected to say something, he struggled against all this mysterious emotion, and faltered out that he should not fear the responsibility, if he might have constant recourse to his father for advice.

“ Why, of course,” was the reply. “ My country house is but a mile from the station : you can telegraph for me in any case of importance.”

“ When would you wish me to commence my new duties ? ”

“ Let me see ; it will take six weeks to prepare a balance-sheet, such as I could be content to submit to an incoming partner. Say two months.”

Young Wardlaw’s countenance fell.

“ Meantime you shall travel on the continent, and enjoy yourself.”

“ Thank you,” said young Wardlaw, mechanically, and fell into a brown study.

The room now returned to what seemed its natural state. And its silence continued until it was broken from without.

A sharp knocking was heard at the street-door, and resounded across the marble hall.

The Wardlaws looked at one another in some little surprise.

"I have invited nobody," said the elder.

Some time elapsed, and then a footman made his appearance, and brought in a card.

"Mr. Christopher Adams."

Now that Mr. Christopher Adams should call on John Wardlaw, in his private room, at nine o'clock in the evening, seemed to that merchant irregular, presumptuous, and monstrous. "Tell him he will find me at my place of business to-morrow, as usual," said he, knitting his brows.

The footman went off with this message; and, soon after, raised voices were heard in the hall, and the episcopal butler entered the room with an injured countenance.

"He says he *must* see you; he is in great anxiety."

"Yes, I am in great anxiety," said a quavering voice at his elbow; and Mr. Adams actually pushed

by the butler, and stood, hat in hand, in those sacred precincts. "Pray excuse me, sir," said he, "but it is very serious; I can't be easy in my mind till I have put you a question."

"This is very extraordinary conduct, sir," said Mr. Wardlaw. "Do you think I do business here, and at all hours?"

"Oh no, sir; it is my own business. I am come to ask you a very serious question. I couldn't wait till morning with such a doubt on my mind."

"Well, sir, I repeat this is irregular and extraordinary; but, as you are here, pray what is the matter?" He then dismissed the lingering butler with a look. Mr. Adams cast uneasy glances on young Wardlaw.

"Oh," said the elder, "you can speak before him. This is my partner; that is to say, he will be as soon as the balance-sheet can be prepared, and the deed drawn. Wardlaw junior, this is Mr. Adams, a very respectable bill discounter."

The two men bowed to each other, and Arthur Wardlaw sat down motionless.

"Sir, did you draw a note of hand to-day?" inquired Adams of the elder merchant.

“ I dare say I did. Did you discount one signed by me ? ”

“ Yes, sir, we did.”

“ Well, sir, you have only to present it at maturity. Wardlaw & Son will provide for it, I dare say.” This with the lofty nonchalance of a rich man, who had never broken an engagement in his life.

“ Ah, that I know they will if it is all right ; but suppose it is not ? ”

“ What d’ye mean ? ” asked Wardlaw, with some astonishment.

“ Oh, nothing, sir. It bears your signature, that is good for twenty times the amount ; and it is endorsed by your cashier. Only what makes me a little uneasy, your bills used to be always on your own forms, and so I told my partner : he discounted it. Gentlemen, I wish you would just look at it.”

“ Of course we will look at it. Show it Arthur first ; his eyes are younger than mine.”

Mr. Adams took out a large bill-book, extracted the note of hand, and passed it across the table to Wardlaw junior. He took it up with a sort of shiver, and bent his head very low over it ; then handed it back in silence.

Adams took it to Wardlaw senior, and laid

it before him, by the side of Arthur's Testament.

The merchant inspected it with his glasses.

"The writing is mine, apparently."

"I am very glad of it," said the bill-broker, eagerly.

"Stop a bit," said Mr. Wardlaw. "Why, what is this? For two thousand pounds! and, as you say, not my form. I have signed no note for two thousand pounds this week. Dated yesterday. You have not cashed it, I hope?"

"I am sorry to say my partner has."

"Well, sir, not to keep you in suspense, the thing is not worth the stamp it is written on."

"Mr. Wardlaw!—Sir!—Good heavens! Then it is as I feared. It is a forgery."

"I should be puzzled to find any other name for it. You need not look so pale, Arthur. We can't help some clever scoundrel imitating our hands; and as for you, Adams, you ought to have been more cautious."

"But, sir, your cashier's name is Penfold," faltered the holder, clinging to a straw. "May he not have drawn—is the indorsement forged as well?"

Mr. Wardlaw examined the back of the bill, and

looked puzzled. "No," said he. "My cashier's name is Michael Penfold, but this is endorsed 'Robert Penfold.' Do you hear, Arthur? Why, what is the matter with you? You look like a ghost. I say there is your tutor's name at the back of this forged note. This is very strange. Just look, and tell me who wrote these two words 'Robert Penfold.'"

Young Wardlaw took the document, and tried to examine it calmly, but it shook visibly in his hand, and a cold moisture gathered on his brow. His pale eyes roved to and fro in a very remarkable way; and he was so long before he said anything, that both the other persons present began to eye him with wonder.

At last he faltered out, "This 'Robert Penfold' seems to me very like his own hand-writing. But then the rest of the writing is equally like yours, sir. I am sure Robert Penfold never did anything wrong. Mr. Adams, pray oblige *me*. Let this go no further till I have seen him, and asked him whether he indorsed it."

"Now don't you be in a hurry," said the elder Wardlaw. "The first question is, who received the money?"

Mr. Adams replied that it was a respectable looking man, a young clergyman.

“ Ah ! ” said Wardlaw, with a world of meaning.

“ Father ! ” said young Wardlaw, imploringly, “ for my sake, say no more to-night. Robert Penfold is incapable of a dishonest act.”

“ It becomes your years to think so, young man. But I have lived long enough to see what crimes respectable men are betrayed into in the hour of temptation. And, now I think of it, this Robert Penfold is in want of money. Did he not ask me for a loan of two thousand pounds ? Was not that the very sum ? Can’t you answer me ? Why, the application came through you.”

Receiving no reply from his son, but a sort of agonised stare, he took out his pencil and wrote down Robert Penfold’s address. This he handed the bill-broker, and gave him some advice in a whisper, which Mr. Christopher Adams received with a profusion of thanks, and bustled away, leaving Wardlaw senior excited and indignant, Wardlaw junior ghastly pale, and almost stupefied.

Scarcely a word was spoken for some minutes, and then the younger man broke out suddenly.

“ Robert Penfold is the best friend I ever had ; I

should have been expelled, but for him, and I should never have earned that Testamur but for him."

The old merchant interrupted him. "You exaggerate: but to tell you the truth, I am sorry now I did not lend him the money you asked for. For, mark my words, in a moment of temptation, that miserable young man has forged my name, and will be convicted of the felony, and punished accordingly."

"No, no; oh, God forbid!" shrieked young Wardlaw. "I couldn't bear it. If he did, he must have intended to replace it. I must see him; I will see him directly." He got up all in a hurry, and was going to Penfold to warn him, and get him out of the way till the money should be replaced. But his father started up at the same moment and forbade him, in accents that he had never yet been able to resist.

"Sit down, sir, this instant," said the old man, with terrible sternness. "Sit down, I say, or you will never be a partner of mine. Justice must take its course. What business and what right have we to protect a felon? I would not take *your* part if you were one. Indeed it is too late now, for the

detectives will be with him before you could reach him. I gave Adams his address."

At this last piece of information Wardlaw junior leaned his head on the table, and groaned aloud, and a cold perspiration gathered in beads upon his white forehead.

CHAPTER II.

THAT same evening sat over their tea, in Norfolk Street, Strand, another couple, who were also father and son; but, in this pair, the Wardlaws were reversed. Michael Penfold was a reverend, gentle creature, with white hair, blue eyes, and great timidity; why, if a stranger put to him a question, he used to look all round the room before he ventured to answer.

Robert, his son, was a young man, with a large brown eye, a mellow voice, square shoulders, and a prompt and vigorous manner. Cricketer. Scholar. Parson.

They were talking hopefully together over a living Robert was going to buy; it was near Oxford, he said, and would not prevent his continuing to take pupils. "But, father," said he, "it will be a place to take my wife to if I ever have one; and, meantime, I hope you will run down now and then, Saturday to Monday."

"That I will, Robert. Ah! how proud *she* would have been to hear you preach; it was always her dream, poor thing."

"Let us think she *can* hear me," said Robert. "And I have got *you* still; the proceeds of this living will help me to lodge you more comfortably."

"You are very good, Robert; I would rather see you spend it upon yourself; but, dear me, what a manager you must be to dress so beautifully as you do, and send your old father presents as you do, and yet put by fourteen hundred pounds to buy this living."

"You are mistaken, sir, I have only saved four hundred; the rest—but that is a secret for the present."

"Oh, I am not inquisitive: I never was."

They then chatted about things of no importance whatever, and the old gentleman was just lighting his candle to go to bed, when a visitor was ushered into the room.

The Penfolds looked a little surprised, but not much. They had no street door all to themselves; no liveried dragons to interpose between them and unseasonable or unwelcome visitors.

The man was well dressed, with one exception:

he wore a gold chain. He had a hooked nose, and a black, piercing eye. He stood at the door and observed every person and thing in the room minutely, before he spoke a word.

Then he said quietly, "Mr. Michael Penfold, I believe."

"At your service, sir."

"And Mr. Robert Penfold."

"I am Robert Penfold. What is your business?"

"Pray is the 'Robert Penfold' at the back of this note your writing?"

"Certainly it is; they would not cash it without that."

"Oh, you got the money, then?"

"Of course I did."

"You have not parted with it, have you?"

"No."

"All the better." He then turned to Michael and looked at him earnestly a moment. "The fact is, sir," said he, "there is a little irregularity about this bill, which must be explained, or your son might be called on to refund the cash."

"Irregularity about—a bill?" cried Michael Penfold, in dismay. "Who is the drawer? Let me see it. Oh, dear me, something wrong about a

bill endorsed by you, Robert?" and the old man began to shake piteously.

"Why, father," said Robert, "what are you afraid of? If the bill is irregular, I can but return the money. It is in the house."

"The best way will be for Mr. Robert Penfold to go at once with me to the bill-broker; he lives but a few doors off. And you, sir, must stay here, and be responsible for the funds, till we return."

Robert Penfold took his hat directly, and went off with this mysterious visitor.

They had not gone many steps, when Robert's companion stopped, and, getting in front of him, said, "We can settle this matter here." At the same time a policeman crossed the way, and joined them; and another man, who was in fact a policeman in plain clothes, emerged from a door-way and stood at Robert Penfold's back.

The Detective, having thus surrounded him, threw off disguise. "My man," said he, "I ought to have done this job in your house. But I looked at the worthy old gentleman, and his grey hairs. I thought I'd spare him all I could. I have a warrant to arrest you for forgery."

"Forgery! arrest me for forgery!" said Robert

Penfold, with some amazement, but little emotion; for he hardly seemed to take it in, in all its horrible significance.

The next moment, however, he turned pale, and almost staggered under the blow.

"We had better go to Mr. Wardlaw," said he. "I entreat you to go to him with me."

"Can't be done," said the Detective. "Wardlaw has nothing to do with it. The bill is stopped. You are arrested by the gent that cashed it. Here is the warrant: will you go quietly with us, or must I put the darbies on?"

Robert was violently agitated. "There is no need to arrest me;" he cried: "I shall not run from my accuser. Hands off, I say. I'm a clergyman of the Church of England, and you shall not lay hands on me."

But one of the policemen did lay hands on him. Then the Reverend Robert Penfold shook him furiously off, and, with one active bound, sprang into the middle of the road.

The officers went at him incautiously, and the head-detective, as he rushed forward, received a heavy blow on the neck and jaw, that sounded along the street, and sent him rolling in the mud;

this was followed by a quick succession of staggering facers, administered right and left, on the eyes and noses of the subordinates. These, however, though bruised and bleeding, succeeded at last in grappling their man, and all came to the ground together, and there struggled furiously; every window in the street was open by this time, and at one the white hair and reverend face of Michael Penfold looked out on this desperate and unseemly struggle, with hands that beat the air in helpless agony, and inarticulate cries of terror.

The Detective got up and sat upon Robert Penfold's chest; and at last the three forced the handcuffs upon him, and took him in a cab to the station-house.

Next day, before the magistrate, Wardlaw senior proved the note was a forgery, and Mr. Adams's partner swore to the prisoner as the person who had presented and endorsed the note. The officers attended, two with black eyes a-piece, and one with his jaw bound up, and two sound teeth in his pocket, which had been driven from their sockets by the prisoner in his desperate attempt to escape. Their evidence hurt the prisoner, and the magistrate refused bail.

The Reverend Robert Penfold was committed to prison, to be tried at the Central Criminal Court on a charge of felony.

Wardlaw senior returned home, and told Wardlaw junior, who said not a word. He soon received a letter from Robert Penfold, which agitated him greatly, and he promised to go to the prison and see him.

But he never went.

He was very miserable, a prey to an inward struggle. He dared not offend his father on the eve of being made partner. Yet his heart bled for Robert Penfold.

He did what might perhaps have been expected from that pale eye and receding chin—he temporised. He said to himself, “Before that horrible trial comes on, I shall be the house of Wardlaw, and able to draw a cheque for thousands. I’ll buy off Adams at any price, and hush up the whole matter.”

So he hoped, and hoped. But the accountant was slow, the public prosecutor unusually quick, and, to young Wardlaw’s agony, the partnership deed was not ready, when an imploring letter was put into his hands, urging him, by all that men

hold sacred, to attend at the court as the prisoner's witness.

This letter almost drove young Wardlaw mad. He went to Adams, and intreated him not to carry the matter into court. But Adams was inexorable. He had got his money, but would be revenged for the fright.

Baffled here, young Wardlaw went down to Oxford and shut himself up in his own room, a prey to fear and remorse. He sported his oak, and never went out. All his exercise was that of a wild beast in its den, walking restlessly up and down.

But all his caution did not prevent the prisoner's solicitor from getting to him. One morning, at seven o'clock, a clerk slipped in at the heels of his scout, and, coming to young Wardlaw's bedside, awoke him out of an uneasy slumber by serving him with a subpoena to appear as Robert Penfold's witness.

This last stroke finished him. His bodily health gave way under his mental distress. Gastric fever set in, and he was lying tossing and raving in delirium, while Robert Penfold was being tried at the Central Criminal Court.

The trial occupied six hours, and could easily be made rather interesting. But, for various reasons, with which it would not be good taste to trouble the reader, we decide to skim it.

The indictment contained two counts; one for forging the note of hand, the other for uttering it, knowing it to be forged.

On the first count, the Crown was weak, and had to encounter the evidence of Undercliff, the distinguished Expert, who swore that the hand which wrote "Robert Penfold" was not, in his opinion, the hand that had written the body of the instrument. He gave many minute reasons, in support of this; and nothing of any weight was advanced contra. The judge directed the jury to acquit the prisoner on that count.

But, on the charge of uttering, the evidence was clear, and, on the question of knowledge, it was, perhaps, a disadvantage to the prisoner that he was tried in England, and could not be heard in person, as he could have been in a foreign court; above all, his resistance to the officers eked out the presumption that he knew the note had been forged by some person or other, who was probably his accomplice.

The absence of his witness, Wardlaw junior, was severely commented on by his counsel; indeed, he appealed to the judge to commit the said Wardlaw for contempt of court. But Wardlaw senior was recalled, and swore that he had left his son in a burning fever, not expected to live; and declared, with genuine emotion, that nothing but a high sense of public duty had brought *him* hither from his dying son's bedside. He also told the court that Arthur's inability to clear his friend had really been the first cause of his illness, from which he was not expected to recover.

The jury consulted together a long time; and, at last, brought in a verdict of "GUILTY;" but recommended him to mercy, on grounds which might fairly have been alleged in favour of his innocence; but, if guilty, rather aggravated his crime.

Then an officer of the court inquired, in a sort of chant or recitativo, whether the prisoner had anything to say why judgment should not be given in accordance with the verdict.

It is easy to divest words of their meaning by false intonation; and prisoners in general receive this bit of sing-song in dead silence. For why?

the chant conveys no idea to their ears, and they would as soon think of *replying* to the notes of a cuckoo.

But the Reverend Robert Penfold was in a keen agony that sharpened all his senses; he caught the sense of the words in spite of the speaker, and clung wildly to the straw that monotonous machine held out. "My Lord! my Lord!" he cried, "I'll tell you the real reason why young Wardlaw is not here."

The judge put up his hand with a gesture that enforced silence:—"Prisoner," said he, "I cannot go back to facts; the jury have dealt with them. Judgment can be arrested only on grounds of law. On these you can be heard. But, if you have none to offer, you must be silent, and submit to your sentence." He then, after a slight pause, proceeded to point out the heinous character of the offence, but admitted there was one mitigating circumstance: and, in conclusion, he condemned the culprit to five years' penal servitude.

At this the poor wretch uttered a cry of anguish that was fearful, and clutched the dock convulsively.

Now a prisoner rarely speaks to a judge with-

out revolting him by bad law, or bad logic, or hot words. But this wild cry was innocent of all these, and went straight from the heart in the dock to the heart on the judgment seat. And so his lordship's voice trembled for a moment, and then became firm again, but solemn and humane. "But," said he, "my experience tells me this is your first crime, and may possibly be your last. I shall therefore use my influence that you may not be associated with more hardened criminals, but may be sent out of this country to another, where you may begin life afresh, and, in the course of years, efface this dreadful stain. Give me hopes of you; begin your repentance, where now you stand, by blaming yourself, and no other man. No man constrained you to utter a forged note, and to receive the money; it was found in your possession. For such an act there can be no defence in law, morality, or religion."

These words overpowered the culprit. He burst out crying with great violence.

But it did not last long. He became strangely composed all of a sudden; and said, "God forgive all concerned in this—but one—but one."

He then bowed respectfully, and like a gentleman, to the judge, and the jury, and walked out of the dock with the air of a man who had parted with emotion, and would march to the gallows now without flinching.

The counsel for the Crown required that the forged document should be impounded.

“I was about to make the same demand,” said the prisoner’s counsel.

The judge snubbed them both, and said it was a matter of course.

Robert Penfold spent a year in separate confinement, and then, to cure him of its salutary effect (if any), was sent on board the hulk “Vengeance,” and was herded with the greatest miscreants in creation. They did not reduce him to their level, but they injured his mind; and, before half his sentence had expired, he sailed for a penal colony, a man with a hot coal in his bosom, a creature embittered, poisoned; hoping little, believing little, fearing little, and hating much.

He took with him the prayer-book his mother had given him when he was ordained deacon. But he seldom read beyond the fly-leaf: there the poor lady had written at large her mother’s heart, and

her pious soul aspiring heavenwards for her darling son. This, when all seemed darkest, he would sometimes run to with moist eyes; for he was sure of his mother's love, but almost doubted the justice of his God.

CHAPTER III.

MR. WARDLAW went down to his son and nursed him. He kept the newspapers from him, and, on his fever abating, had him conveyed by easy stages to the seaside, and then sent him abroad.

The young man obeyed in gloomy silence. He never asked after Robert Penfold, now; never mentioned his name. He seemed, somehow, thankful to be controlled mind and body.

But, before he had been abroad a month, he wrote for leave to return home and to throw himself into business. There was, for once, a nervous impatience in his letters, and his father, who pitied him deeply, and was more than ever inclined to reward and indulge him, yielded readily enough; and, on his arrival, signed the partnership deed, and, Polonius-like, gave him much good counsel then retired to his country seat.

At first he used to run up every three days, and

examine the day-book and ledger, and advise his junior; but these visits soon became fewer, and at last he did little more than correspond occasionally.

Arthur Wardlaw held the reins, and easily paid his Oxford debts out of the assets of the firm. Not being happy in his mind he threw himself into commerce with feverish zeal, and very soon extended the operations of the house.

One of his first acts of authority was to send for Michael Penfold into his room. Now poor old Michael, ever since his son's misfortune, as he called it, had crept to his desk like a culprit, expecting every day to be discharged. When he received this summons he gave a sigh and went slowly to the young merchant.

Arthur Wardlaw looked up at his entrance, then looked down again, and said coldly, "Mr. Penfold, you have been a faithful servant to us many years; I raise your salary 50*l.* a year, and you will keep the ledger."

The old man was dumfounded at first, and then began to give vent to his surprise and gratitude; but Wardlaw cut him short, almost fiercely. "There, there, there," said he, without raising his

eyes, "let me hear no more about it, and, above all, never speak to me of that cursed business. It was no fault of yours, nor mine neither. There—go—I want no thanks. Do you hear? leave me, Mr. Penfold, if you please."

The old man bowed low and retired, wondering much at his employer's goodness, and a little at his irritability.

Wardlaw junior's whole soul was given to business night and day, and he soon became known for a very ambitious and rising merchant. But, by-and-by, ambition had to encounter a rival in his heart. He fell in love; deeply in love; and with a worthy object.

The young lady was the daughter of a distinguished officer, whose merits were universally recognised, but not rewarded in proportion. Wardlaw's suit was favourably received by the father, and the daughter gradually yielded to an attachment, the warmth, sincerity, and singleness of which were manifest; and the pair would have been married, but for the circumstance that her father (partly through Wardlaw's influence, by-the-bye) had obtained a lucrative post abroad, which it suited his means to accept, at all events for a time. He was

a widower, and his daughter could not let him go alone.

This temporary separation, if it postponed a marriage, led naturally to a solemn engagement; and Arthur Wardlaw enjoyed the happiness of writing and receiving affectionate letters by every foreign post. Love, worthily bestowed, shed its balm upon his heart, and, under its soft but powerful charm, he grew tranquil and complacent, and his character and temper seemed to improve. Such virtue is there in a pure attachment.

Meanwhile the extent of his operations alarmed old Penfold; but he soon reasoned that worthy down with overpowering conclusions and superior smiles.

He had been three years the ruling spirit of Wardlaw & Son, when some curious events took place in another hemisphere; and in these events, which we are now to relate, Arthur Wardlaw was more nearly interested than may appear at first sight.

Robert Penfold, in due course, applied to Lieutenant-General Rolleston for a ticket of leave. That functionary thought the application prema-

ture, the crime being so grave. He complained that the system had become too lax, and for his part he seldom gave a ticket of leave until some suitable occupation was provided for the applicant. "Will anybody take you as a clerk? If so—I'll see about it."

Robert Penfold could find nobody to take him into a post of confidence all at once, and wrote the General an eloquent letter, begging hard to be allowed to labour with his hands.

Fortunately, General Rolleston's gardener had just turned him off: so he offered the post to his eloquent correspondent, remarking that he did not much mind employing a ticket-of-leave man himself, though he was resolved to protect his neighbours from their relapses.

The convict then came to General Rolleston, and begged leave to enter on his duties under the name of James Seaton. At that General Rolleston hem'd and haw'd, and took a note. But his final decision was as follows:—"If you really mean to change your character, why the name you have disgraced might hang round your neck. Well, I'll give you every chance. But," said this old warrior, suddenly compressing his resolute lips just a little, "if you

go a yard off the straight path *now*, look for no mercy—Jemmy Seaton.”

So the convict was re-christened at the tail of a threat, and let loose among the warrior’s tulips.

His appearance was changed as effectually as his name. Even before he was Seatoned he had grown a silky moustache and beard of singular length and beauty; and what with these, and his working man’s clothes, and his cheeks and neck tanned by the sun, our readers would never have recognised in this hale, bearded labourer the pale prisoner that had trembled, raged, wept, and submitted in the dock of the Central Criminal Court.

Our Universities cure men of doing things by halves, be the things mental or muscular; so Seaton gardened much more zealously than his plebeian predecessor: up at five, and did not leave till eight.

But he was unpopular in the kitchen—because he was always out of it: taciturn and bitter, he shunned his fellow-servants.

Yet working among the flowers did him good; these his pretty companions and nurslings had no vices.

One day, as he was rolling the grass upon the lawn, he heard a soft rustle at some distance, and,

looking round, saw a young lady on the gravel path, whose calm but bright face, coming so suddenly, literally dazzled him. She had a clear cheek blooming with exercise, rich brown hair, smooth, glossy, and abundant, and a very light hazel eye, of singular beauty and serenity. She glided along, tranquil as a goddess, smote him with beauty and perfume, and left him staring after her receding figure, which was, in its way, as captivating as her face.

She was walking up and down for exercise, briskly, but without effort. Once she passed within a few yards of him, but her eyes did not rest an instant on her gardener; and so she passed and re-passed, unconsciously sawing this solitary heart with soft but penetrating thrills.

At last she went indoors to luncheon, and the lawn seemed to miss the light music of her rustling dress, and the sunshine of her presence, and there was a painful void; but that passed, and a certain sense of happiness stole over James Seaton—an unreasonable joy, that often runs before folly and trouble.

The young lady was Helen Rolleston, just returned home from a visit. She walked in the garden every day, and Seaton watched her, and

peeped at her, unseen, behind trees and bushes. He fed his eyes and his heart upon her, and, by degrees, she became the sun of his solitary existence. It was madness; but its first effect was not unwholesome. The daily study of this creature, who, though by no means the angel he took her for, was at all events a pure and virtuous woman, soothed his sore heart, and counteracted the demoralising influences of his late companions. Every day he drank deeper of an insane, but purifying and elevating passion.

He avoided the kitchen still more; and that, by-the-bye, was unlucky; for there he could have learned something about Miss Helen Rolleston, that would have warned him to keep at the other end of the garden, whenever that charming face and form glided to and fro amongst the minor flowers.

A beautiful face fires our imagination, and we see higher virtue and intelligence in it, than we can detect in its owner's head or heart when we descend to calm inspection. James Seaton gazed on Miss Rolleston day after day, at so respectful a distance, that she became his goddess. If a day passed without his seeing her, he was dejected. When she was

behind her time, he was restless, anxious, and his work distasteful; and then, when she came out at last, he thrilled all over, and the lawn, ay, the world itself, seemed to fill with sunshine. His adoration, timid by its own nature, was doubly so by reason of his fallen and hopeless condition. He cut nose-gays for her; but gave them to her maid Wilson for her. He had not the courage to offer them to herself.

One evening, as he went home, a man addressed him familiarly, but in a low voice. Seaton looked at him attentively, and recognised him at last. It was a convict called Butt, who had come over in the ship with him. The man offered him a glass of ale; Seaton declined it. Butt, a very clever rogue, seemed hurt: so then Seaton assented reluctantly. Butt took him to a public-house in a narrow street, and into a private room. Seaton started as soon as he entered, for there sat two repulsive ruffians, and, by a look that passed rapidly between them and Butt, he saw plainly they were waiting for him. He felt nervous; the place was so uncouth and dark, the faces so villainous.

However, they invited him to sit down, roughly, but with an air of good fellowship; and very soon

opened their business over their ale. We are all bound to assist our fellow-creatures, when it can be done without trouble; and what they asked of him was a simple act of courtesy, such as in their opinion no man worthy of the name could deny to his fellow. It was to give General Rolleston's watch-dog a piece of prepared meat upon a certain evening: and in return for this trifling civility, they were generous enough to offer him a full share of any light valuables they might find in the General's house.

Seaton felt the danger of refusing, and put his face in his hands a moment. "I cannot do it," said he.

"Why not?"

"He has been too good to me."

A coarse laugh of derision greeted this argument; it seemed so irrelevant to these pure ego-tists. Seaton, however, persisted, and on that one of the men got up and stood before the door, and drew his knife gently.

Seaton glanced his eyes round in search of a weapon, and turned pale.

"Do you mean to split on us, mate?" said one of the ruffians in front of him.

“No, I don’t. But I won’t rob my benefactor: you shall kill me first.” And with that he darted to the fire-place, and in a moment the poker was high in air, and the way he squared his shoulders and stood ready to hit to the on, or cut to the off, was a caution.

“Come drop that,” said Butt, grimly; “and put up *your* knife, Bob. Can’t a pal be out of a job, and yet not split on them that is in it?”

“Why should I split?” said Robert Penfold. “Has the law been a friend to me? But I won’t rob my benefactor—and his daughter.”

“That is square enough,” said Butt. “Why, pals, there are other cribs to be cracked besides that old bloke’s. Finish the ale, mate, and part friends.”

“If you will promise me to ‘crack some other crib,’ and let that one alone.”

A sullen assent was given, and Seaton drank their healths, and walked away. Butt followed him soon after, and affected to side with him, and intimated that he himself was capable of not robbing a man’s house who had been good to him, or to a pal of his. Indeed this plausible person said so much, and his sullen comrades had said so little, that

Seaton, rendered keen and anxious by love, invested his savings in a Colt's revolver and ammunition.

He did not stop there; after the hint about the watch-dog, he would not trust that faithful but too carnivorous animal; he brought his blankets into the little tool-house, and lay there every night in a sort of dog's sleep. This tool-house was erected in a little back garden, separated from the lawn only by some young trees in single file. Now Miss Rolleston's window looked out upon the lawn, so that Seaton's watch-tower was not many yards from it; then, as the tool-house was only lighted from above, he bored a hole in the wooden structure, and through this he watched, and slept, and watched. He used to sit studying theology by a farthing rush-light till the lady's bed-time, and then he watched for her shadow. If it appeared for a few moments on the blind, he gave a sigh of content, and went to sleep, but awaked every now and then to see that all was well.

After a few nights, his alarms naturally ceased, but his love increased, fed now from this new source, the sweet sense of being the secret protector of her he adored.

Meantime, Miss Rolleston's lady's maid, Wilson, fell in love with him after her fashion; she had taken a fancy to his face at once, and he had encouraged her a little, unintentionally; for he brought the nosegays to her, and listened complacently to her gossip, for the sake of the few words she let fall now and then about her young mistress. As he never exchanged two sentences at a time with any other servant, this flattered Sarah Wilson, and she soon began to meet and accost him oftener, and in cherrier-coloured ribbons, than he could stand. So then he showed impatience, and then she, reading him by herself, suspected some vulgar rival.

Suspicion soon bred jealousy, jealousy vigilance, and vigilance detection.

Her first discovery was, that, so long as she talked of Miss Helen Rolleston, she was always welcome; her second was, that Seaton slept in the tool-house.

She was not romantic enough to connect her two discoveries together. They lay apart in her mind, until circumstances we are about to relate supplied a connecting link.

One Thursday evening James Seaton's goddess sat alone with her papa, and—being a young lady of

fair abilities, who had gone through her course of music and other studies, taught brainlessly, and who was now going through a course of monotonous pleasures, and had not accumulated any great store of mental resources—she was listless, and languid, and would have yawned forty times in her papa's face, only she was too well bred. She always turned her head away when it came, and either suppressed it, or else hid it with a lovely white hand. At last, as she was a good girl, she blushed at her behaviour, and roused herself up, and said she, "Papa, shall I play you the new quadrilles?"

Papa gave a start and a shake, and said, with well-feigned vehemence, "Ay, do, my dear," and so composed himself—to listen; and Helen sat down and played the quadrilles.

The composer had taken immortal melodies, some gay, some sad, and had robbed them of their distinctive character, and hashed them, till they were all one monotonous rattle. But General Rolleston was little the worse for all this. As Apollo saved Horace from hearing a poetaster's rhymes, so did Somnus, another beneficent little deity, rescue our warrior from his daughter's music.

She was neither angry nor surprised. A delicious smile illumined her face directly; she crept to him on tip-toe, and bestowed a kiss, light as a zephyr, on his grey head. And, in truth, the bending attitude of this supple figure, clad in snowy muslin, the virginal face and light hazel eye beaming love and reverence, and the airy kiss, had something angelic.

She took her candle, and glided up to her bedroom. And, the moment she got there, and could gratify her somnolence without offence, need we say she became wide-awake? She sat down and wrote long letters to three other young ladies, gushing affection, asking questions of the kind nobody replies to, painting, with a young lady's colours, the male being to whom she was shortly to be married, wishing her dear friends a like demi-god, if perchance earth contained two; and so to the last new bonnet, and preacher.

She sat over her paper till one o'clock, and Seaton watched and adored her shadow.

When she had done writing, she opened her window and looked out upon the night. She lifted those wonderful hazel eyes towards the stars, and her watcher might well be pardoned if he saw in

her a celestial being looking up from an earthly resting-place towards her native sky.

At two o'clock she was in bed, but not asleep. She lay calmly gazing at the Southern Cross, and other lovely stars shining with vivid, but chaste, fire in the purple vault of heaven.

While thus employed she heard a slight sound outside that made her turn her eyes towards a young tree near her window. Its top branches were waving a good deal, though there was not a breath stirring. This struck her as curious, very curious.

Whilst she wondered, suddenly an arm and a hand came in sight, and after them the whole figure of a man, going up the tree.

Helen sat up now, glaring with terror, and was so paralysed she did not utter a sound. About a foot below her window was a lead flat that roofed the bay window below. It covered an area of several feet, and the man sprang on to it with perfect ease from the tree. Helen shrieked with terror. At that very instant there was a flash, a pistol shot, and the man's arms went whirling, and he staggered and fell over the edge of the flat, and struck the grass below with a heavy thud.

Shots and blows followed, and all the sounds of fierce fighting rung in Helen's ears as she flung herself screaming from the bed and darted to the door. She ran and clung quivering to her sleepy maid, Wilson. The house was alarmed, lights flashed, footsteps pattered, there was universal commotion.

General Rolleston soon learned his daughter's story from Wilson, and aroused his male servants, one of whom was an old soldier. They searched the house first; but no entrance had been effected; so they went out on the lawn with blunderbuss and pistol.

They found a man lying on his back at the foot of the bay window.

They pounced on him, and, to their amazement, it was the gardener, James Seaton. Insensible.

General Rolleston was quite taken aback for a moment. Then he was sorry. But after a little reflection, he said very sternly, "Carry the black-guard in-doors; and run for an officer."

Seaton was taken into the hall, and laid flat on the floor.

All the servants gathered about him, brimful of curiosity, and the female ones began to speak all

together; but General Rolleston told them sharply to hold their tongues, and to retire behind the man. "Somebody sprinkle him with cold water," said he; "and be quiet, all of you, and keep out of his sight, while I examine him." He stood before the insensible figure with his arms folded, amidst a dead silence, broken only by the stifled sobs of Sarah Wilson, and of a sociable housemaid who cried with her for company.

And now Seaton began to writhe and show signs of returning sense.

Next he moaned piteously, and sighed. But General Rolleston could not pity him; he waited grimly for returning consciousness, to subject him to a merciless interrogatory.

He waited just one second too long. He had to answer a question instead of putting one.

The judgment is the last faculty a man recovers when emerging from insensibility; and Seaton, seeing the General standing before him, stretched out his hands, and said, in a faint but earnest voice, before eleven witnesses, "Is she safe? Oh, is she safe?"

CHAPTER IV.

SARAH WILSON left off crying, and looked down on the ground with a very red face. General Rolleston was amazed. "Is she safe! Is who safe?" said he. "He means my mistress," replied Wilson, rather brusquely; and flounced out of the hall.

"She is safe, no thanks to you," said General Rolleston. "What were you doing under her window at this time of night?" And the harsh tone in which this question was put showed Seaton he was suspected. This wounded him, and he replied, doggedly, "Lucky for you all I was there."

"That is no answer to my question," said the General, sternly.

"It is all the answer I shall give you."

"Then I shall hand you over to the officer, without another word."

"Do, sir, do," said Seaton, bitterly; but he added

more gently, "you will be sorry for it when you come to your senses."

At this moment Wilson entered with a message. "If you please, sir, Miss Rolleston says the robber had no beard. Miss have never noticed Seaton's face, but his beard she have; and oh! if you please, sir, she begged me to ask him—Was it you that fired the pistol and shot the robber?"

The delivery of this ungrammatical message, but rational query, was like a ray of light streaming into a dark place: it changed the whole aspect of things. As for Seaton, he received it as if Heaven was speaking to him through Wilson. His sullen air relaxed, the water stood in his eyes, he smiled affectionately, and said in a low, tender voice, "Tell her I heard some bad characters talking about this house—that was a month ago—so, ever since then, I have slept in the tool-house to watch. Yes, I shot the robber with my revolver, and I marked one or two more; but they were three to one; I think I must have got a blow on the head; for I felt nothing——"

Here he was interrupted by a violent scream from Wilson. She pointed downwards, with her eyes glaring; and a little blood was seen to

be trickling slowly over Seaton's stocking and shoe.

"Wounded," said the General's servant, Tom, in the business-like accent of one who had seen a thousand wounds.

"Oh! never mind that," said Seaton. "It can't be very deep, for I don't feel it;" then, fixing his eyes on General Rolleston, he said, in a voice that broke down suddenly, "There stands the only man who has wounded me to-night, to hurt me."

The way General Rolleston received this point blank reproach surprised some persons present, who had observed only the imperious and iron side of his character. He hung his head in silence a moment; then, being discontented with himself, he went into a passion with his servants for standing idle. "Run away, you women," said he, roughly. "Now, Tom, if you are good for anything, strip the man and staunch his wound. Andrew, a bottle of port, quick!"

Then, leaving him for a while in friendly hands, he went to his daughter and asked her if she saw any objection to a bed being made up in the house for the wounded convict.

"Oh, papa," said she, "why of course not. I

am all gratitude. What is he like, Wilson? for it is a most provoking thing, I never noticed his face, only his beautiful beard glittering in the sunshine ever so far off. Poor young man! Oh yes, papa! send him to bed directly, and we will all nurse him. I never did any good in the world yet, and so why not begin at once?"

General Rolleston laughed at this squirt of enthusiasm from his staid daughter, and went off to give the requisite orders.

But Wilson followed him immediately and stopped him in the passage. "If you please, sir, I think you had better not. I have something to tell you." She then communicated to him by degrees her suspicion that James Seaton was in love with his daughter. He treated this with due ridicule at first; but she gave him one reason after another till she staggered him, and he went down stairs in a most mixed and puzzled frame of mind, inclined to laugh, inclined to be angry, inclined to be sorry.

The officer had just arrived, and was looking over some photographs to see if James Seaton was "one of his birds." Such, alas! was his expression.

At sight of this, Rolleston coloured up; but extricated himself from the double difficulty with some skill. "Hexham," said he, "this poor fellow has behaved like a man, and got himself wounded in my service. You are to take him to the infirmary; but mind, they must treat him like my own son, and nothing he asks for denied him."

Seaton walked with feeble steps, and leaning on two men, to the infirmary; and General Rolleston ordered a cup of coffee, lighted a cigar, and sat cogitating over this strange business, and asking himself how he could get rid of this young madman, and yet befriend him. As for Sarah Wilson, she went to bed discontented, and wondering at her own bad judgment. She saw, too late, that, if she had held her tongue, Seaton would have been her patient and her prisoner; and as for Miss Rolleston, when it came to the point, why she would never have nursed him except by proxy, and the proxy would have been Sarah Wilson.

However the blunder, blind passion had led her into, was partially repaired by Miss Rolleston herself. When she heard next day where Seaton was gone, she lifted up her hands in amazement. "What *could* papa be thinking of to send our

benefactor to a hospital?" And, after meditating awhile, she directed Wilson to cut a nosegay and carry it to Seaton. "He is a gardener," said she, innocently. "Of course he will miss his flowers sadly in that miserable place."

And she gave the same order every day with a constancy that, you must know, formed part of this young lady's character. Soup, wine, and jellies were sent from the kitchen every other day with equal pertinacity.

Wilson concealed the true donor of all those things, and took the credit to herself. By this means she obtained the patient's gratitude, and he showed it so frankly, she hoped to steal his love as well.

But no! his fancy and his heart remained true to the cold beauty he had served so well, and she had forgotten him, apparently.

This irritated Wilson at last, and she set to work to cure him with wholesome but bitter medicine. She sat down beside him one day, and said, cheerfully, "We are all '*on the key-feet*' just now. Miss Rolleston's beau is come on a visit."

The patient opened his eyes with astonishment.

"Miss Rolleston's beau?"

"Ay, her Intended. What, didn't you know she is engaged to be married?"

"She engaged to be married?" gasped Seaton.

Wilson watched him with a remorseless eye.

"Why, James," said she, after a while, "did you think the likes of her would go through the world without a mate?"

Seaton made no reply but a moan, and lay back like one dead, utterly crushed by this cruel blow.

A buxom middle aged nurse now came up, and said, with a touch of severity, "Come, my good girl, no doubt you mean well, but you are doing ill. You had better leave him to us for the present."

On this hint Wilson bounced out, and left the patient to his misery.

At her next visit she laid a nosegay on his bed, and gossiped away, talking of everything in the world except Miss Rolleston.

At last she came to a pause, and Seaton laid his hand on her arm directly, and looking piteously in her face spoke his first word.

"Does she love him?"

"What, still harping on *her*?" said Wilson;

"well, she doesn't hate him, I suppose, or she would not marry him."

"For pity's sake don't trifle with me! Does she love him?"

"La, James, how can I tell? She mayn't love him quite as much as I could love a man, that took my fancy" (here she cast a languishing glance on Seaton); "but I see no difference between her and other young ladies. Miss is very fond of her papa, for one thing; and he favours the match. Ay, and she likes her partner well enough: she is brighter like now he is in the house, and she reads all her friends' letters to him ever so lovingly; and I do notice she leans on him out walking, a trifle more than there is any need for."

At this picture James Seaton writhed in his bed like some agonised creature under vivisection; but the woman, spurred by jealousy, and also by egotistical passion, had no mercy left for him.

"And why not?" continued she; "he is young, and handsome, and rich, and he dotes on her. If you are really her friend, you ought to be glad she is so well suited."

At this admonition the tears stood in Seaton's eyes, and, after a while, he got strength to say, "I

know I ought, I know it. If he is only worthy of her: as worthy as any man could be."

"That he is, James. Why, I'll be bound you have heard of him. It is young Mr. Wardlaw."

Seaton started up in bed. "Who? Wardlaw? what Wardlaw?"

"What Wardlaw? why the great London merchant, his son. Leastways he manages the whole concern now, I hear; the old gentleman, he is retired, by all accounts."

"Arthur Wardlaw! He is a villain!" yelled James Seaton, with his eyes glaring fearfully, and both hands beating the air.

Sarah Wilson recoiled with alarm.

"That angel marry *him*!" shrieked Seaton. "Never, while I live: I'll throttle him with these hands first."

What more his ungovernable fury would have uttered was interrupted by a rush of nurses and attendants, and Wilson was bundled out of the place with little ceremony.

He contrived however to hurl a word after her, accompanied with a look of concentrated rage and resolution that haunted her for years.

"Never, I tell you—while I live."

At her next visit to the hospital, Wilson was refused admission, by order of the Head Surgeon. She left her flowers daily all the same.

After a few days, she thought the matter might have cooled, and, having a piece of news to communicate to Seaton, with respect to Arthur Wardlaw, she asked to see that patient.

"Left the hospital this morning," was the reply.

"What, cured?"

"Why not? We have cured worse cases than his."

"Where has he gone to? Pray tell me."

"Oh, certainly." And inquiry was made. But the reply was, "Left no address."

Sarah Wilson, like many other women of high and low degree, had swift misgivings of mischief to come. She was taken with a fit of trembling, and had to sit down in the hall.

And, to tell the truth, she had cause to tremble; for that tongue of hers had launched two wild beasts—Jealousy and Revenge.

When she got better she went home, and, coward-like, said not a word to living soul.

That day, Arthur Wardlaw dined with General Rolleston and Helen. They were to be alone for a

certain reason; and he came half an hour before dinner. Helen thought he would, and was ready for him on the lawn.

They walked arm-in-arm, talking of the happiness before them, and regretting a temporary separation that was to intervene. He was her father's choice, and she loved her father devotedly; he was her male property; and young ladies like that sort of property, especially when they see nothing to dislike in it. He loved her passionately, and that was her due, and pleased her, and drew a gentle affection, if not a passion, from her in return. Yes, that lovely forehead did come very near young Wardlaw's shoulder, more than once or twice, as they strolled slowly up and down on the soft mossy turf.

And, on the other side of the hedge that bounded the lawn, a man lay crouched in the ditch, and saw it all with gleaming eyes.

Just before the affianced ones went in, Helen said, "I have a little favour to ask you, dear. The poor man, Seaton, who fought the robbers, and was wounded—papa says he is a man of education, and wanted to be a clerk or something. *Could* you find him a place?"

"I think I can," said Wardlaw; "indeed, I am sure. A line to White & Co. will do it; they want a shipping clerk."

"Oh, how good you are!" said Helen; and lifted her face all beaming with thanks.

The opportunity was tempting; the lover fond: two faces met for a single moment, and one of the two burned for five minutes after.

The basilisk eyes saw the soft collision; but the owner of those eyes did not hear the words that earned him that torture. He lay still and bided his time.

General Rolleston's house stood clear of the town, at the end of a short, but narrow and tortuous lane. This situation had tempted the burglars whom Seaton baffled; and now it tempted Seaton.

Wardlaw must pass that way on leaving General Rolleston's house.

At a bend of the lane two twin elms stood out a foot or two from the hedge. Seaton got behind these at about ten o'clock, and watched for him with a patience and immobility that boded ill.

His preparations for this encounter were singular. He had a close-shutting inkstand and a pen, and

one sheet of paper, at the top of which he had written "Sydney," and the day of the month and year, leaving the rest blank. And he had the revolver with which he had shot the robber at Helen Rolleston's window.

CHAPTER V.

THE moon went down; the stars shone out clearer.

Eleven o'clock boomed from a church clock in the town.

Wardlaw did not come, and Seaton did not move from his ambush.

Twelve o'clock boomed, and Wardlaw never came, and Seaton never moved.

Soon after midnight, General Rolleston's hall-door opened, and a figure appeared in a flood of light. Seaton's eyes gleamed at the sight, for it was young Wardlaw, with a footman at his back holding a lighted lamp.

Wardlaw, however, seemed in no hurry to leave the house, and the reason soon appeared; he was joined by Helen Rolleston, and she was equipped for walking. The watcher saw her serene face shine in the light. The General himself came

next; and, as they left the door, out came Tom with a blunderbuss, and brought up the rear. Seaton drew behind the trees, and postponed, but did not resign, his purpose.

Steps and murmurings came, and passed him, and receded.

The only words he caught distinctly came from Wardlaw, as he passed. "It is nearly high tide. I fear we must make haste."

Seaton followed the whole party at a short distance, feeling sure they would eventually separate and give him his opportunity with Wardlaw.

They went down to the harbour and took a boat; Seaton came nearer, and learned they were going on board the great steamer bound for England, that loomed so black, with monstrous eyes of fire.

They put off, and Seaton stood baffled.

Presently, the black monster, with enormous eyes of fire, spouted her steam like a Leviathan, and then was still; next the smoke puffed, the heavy paddles revolved, and she rushed out of the harbour; and Seaton sat down upon the ground, and all seemed ended. Helen gone to England! Wardlaw gone with her! Love and revenge had alike eluded him. He looked up at the sky, and played

with the pebbles at his feet, stupidly, stupidly. He wondered why he was ever born; why he consented to live a single minute after this. His angel and his demon gone home together; and he left here!

He wrote a few lines on the paper he had intended for Wardlaw, sprinkled them with sand, and put them in his bosom, then stretched himself out with a weary moan, like a dying dog, to wait the flow of the tide and, with it, Death. Whether or not his resolution or his madness would have carried him so far cannot be known, for even as the water rippled in and, trickling under his back, chilled him to the bone, a silvery sound struck his ear. He started to his feet, and life and its joys rushed back upon him. It was the voice of the woman he loved so madly.

Helen Rolleston was on the water, coming ashore again in the little boat.

He crawled, like a lizard, among the boats ashore to catch a sight of her: he did see her, was near her, unseen himself. She landed with her father. So Wardlaw was gone to England without her. Seaton trembled with joy. Presently his goddess began to lament in the prettiest way. "Papa! Papa!" she sighed, "Why must friends part, in

this sad world? Poor Arthur is gone from me: and, by-and-by I shall go from you, my own papa." And at that prospect she wept gently.

"Why, you foolish child!" said the old General, tenderly, "what matters a little parting, when we are all to meet again, in dear old England. Well then, there, have a cry; it will do you good." He patted her head tenderly, as she clung to his warlike breast; and she took him at his word; the tears ran swiftly and glistened in the very starlight.

Seaton's heart yearned at all this.

What? musn't *he* say a word to comfort her; he who, at that moment, would have thought no more of dying to serve her, or to please her, than he would of throwing one of those pebbles into that slimy water.

Well, her pure tears somehow cooled his hot brain, and washed his soul, and left him wondering at himself and his misdeeds this night. His guardian angel seemed to go by and wave her dewy wings, and fan his hot passions as she passed.

He kneeled down and thanked God he had not met Arthur Wardlaw in that dark lane.

Then he went home to his humble lodgings, and

there buried himself; and from that day seldom went out, except to seek employment. He soon obtained it as a copyist.

Meantime the police were on his track, employed by a person with a gentle disposition, but a tenacity of purpose truly remarkable.

Great was Seaton's uneasiness when one day he saw Hexham at the foot of his stair; greater still, when the officer's quick eye caught sight of him, and his light foot ascended the stairs directly. He felt sure Hexham had heard of his lurking about General Rolleston's premises. However, he prepared to defend himself to the uttermost.

Hexham came into his room without ceremony, and looking mighty grim. "Well, my lad, so we have got you, after all."

"What is my crime, now?" asked Seaton, sullenly.

"James," said the officer, very solemnly, "it is an unheard of crime this time. You have been-running-away-from a pretty girl. Now that is a mistake at all times; but, when she is as beautiful as a angel, and rich enough to slip a fiver into Dick Hexham's hands, and lay him on your track, what is the use? Letter for *you*, my man."

Seaton took the letter with a puzzled air. It was written in a clear but feminine hand, and slightly scented.

The writer, in a few polished lines, excused herself for taking extraordinary means to find Mr. Seaton; but hoped he would consider that he had laid her under a deep obligation, and that gratitude *will* sometimes be importunate. She had the pleasure to inform him that the office of shipping clerk, at Messrs. White & Co.'s, was at his service, and she hoped he would take it without an hour's further delay, for she was assured that many persons had risen to wealth and consideration in the colony from such situations.

Then, as this wary but courteous young lady had no wish to enter into a correspondence with her ex-gardener, she added—"Mr. Seaton need not trouble himself to reply to this note. A simple 'yes' to Mr. Hexham will be enough and will give sincere pleasure to Mr. Seaton's

"Obedient servant and well wisher,

"HELEN ANNE ROLLESTON."

Seaton bowed his head over this letter in silent but deep emotion.

Hexham respected that emotion and watched him with a sort of vague sympathy.

Seaton lifted his head, and the tears stood thick in his eyes. Said he, in a voice of exquisite softness, scarce above a whisper, "Tell her 'yes,' and 'God bless her.' Good-bye. I want to go on my knees, and pray God to bless her as she deserves."

Hexham took the hint, and retired softly.

CHAPTER VI.

WHITE & Co. stumbled on a treasure in James Seaton. Your colonial clerk is not so narrow and apathetic as your London clerk, whose two objects seem to be, to learn one department only, and not to do too much in that; but Seaton, a gentleman and a scholar, eclipsed even colonial clerks in this, that he omitted no opportunity of learning the whole business of White & Co., and was also animated by a feverish zeal, that now and then provoked laughter from clerks, but was agreeable, as well as surprising, to White & Co. Of that zeal, his incurable passion was partly the cause. Fortunes had been made with great rapidity in Sydney; and Seaton now conceived a wild hope of acquiring one, by some lucky hit, before Wardlaw could return to Helen Rolleston. And yet his common sense said, if I was as rich as Cræsus, how could she ever mate with me, a stained man? And

yet his burning heart said, don't listen to reason; listen only to me. Try.

And so he worked double tides; and, in virtue of his University education, had no snobbish notions about never putting his hand to manual labour: he would lay down his pen at any moment, and bear a hand to lift a chest, or roll a cask. Old White saw him thus multiply himself, and was so pleased that he raised his salary one-third.

He never saw Helen Rolleston, except on Sunday. On that day he went to her church, and sat half behind a pillar, and feasted his eyes and his heart upon her. He lived sparingly, saved money, bought a strip of land, by payment of 10*l.* deposit, and sold it in forty hours for 100*l.* profit, and watched keenly for similar opportunities on a larger scale; and all for her. Struggling with a mountain: hoping against reason, and the world.

White & Co. were employed to ship a valuable cargo on board two vessels chartered by Wardlaw & Son, the Shannon, and the Proserpine.

Both these ships lay in Sydney harbour, and had taken in the bulk of their cargoes; but the supplement was the cream. For Wardlaw, in person, had

warehoused eighteen cases of gold dust and ingots, and forty of lead and smelted copper. They were all examined and branded by Mr. White, who had duplicate keys of the gold cases. But the contents, as a matter of habit and prudence, were not described outside: but were marked Proserpine and Shannon, respectively; the mate of the Proserpine, who was in Wardlaw's confidence, had written instructions to look carefully to the stowage of all these cases, and was in and out of the store one afternoon just before closing, and measured the cubic contents of the cases, with a view to stowage in the respective vessels. The last time he came he seemed rather the worse for liquor; and Seaton, who accompanied him, having stepped out a minute for something or other, was rather surprised on his return to find the door closed, and it struck him Mr. Wylie (that was the mate's name) might be inside; the more so as the door closed very easily with a spring bolt, but could only be opened by a key of peculiar construction. Seaton took out his key, opened the door, and called to the mate, but received no reply. However, he took the precaution to go round the store, and see whether Wylie, rendered somnolent by liquor, might not be

lying oblivious among the cases: Wylie, however, was not to be seen, and Seaton, finding himself alone, did an unwise thing; he came and contemplated Wardlaw's cases of metal and specie. (Men will go too near the thing that causes their pain.) He eyed them with grief and with desire, and could not restrain a sigh at these material proofs of his rival's wealth: the wealth that probably had smoothed his way to General Rolleston's home, and to his daughter's heart; for wealth can pave the way to hearts, ay even to hearts that cannot be downright bought. This reverie no doubt lasted longer than he thought, for presently he heard the loud rattle of shutters going up below: it was closing time; he hastily closed and locked the iron shutters, and then went out and shut the door.

He had been gone about two hours, and that part of the street, so noisy in business hours, was hushed in silence, all but an occasional footstep on the flags outside, when something mysterious occurred in the warehouse, now as dark as pitch.

At an angle of the wall stood two large cases in a vertical position, with smaller cases lying at their feet; these two cases were about eight feet high,

more or less. Well, behind these cases suddenly flashed a feeble light, and the next moment two brown, and sinewy, hands appeared on the edge of one of the cases—the edge next the wall; the case vibrated and rocked a little, and the next moment there mounted on the top of it, not a cat, nor a monkey, as might have been expected, but an animal that in truth resembles both those quadrupeds, *viz.*, a sailor; and need we say that sailor was the mate of the Proserpine. He descended lightly from the top of the case, behind which he had been jammed for hours, and lighted a dark lantern; and went softly groping about the store with it. This was a mysterious act, and would perhaps have puzzled the proprietors of the store even more than it would a stranger: for a stranger would have said at once this is burglary, or else arson; but those acquainted with the place would have known that neither of those crimes was very practicable. The enterprising sailor could not burn down this particular store without roasting himself the first thing; and indeed he could not burn it down at all: for the roof was flat, and was in fact one gigantic iron tank, like the roof of Mr. Goding's brewery in London: and by a neat contrivance of American

origin, the whole tank could be turned in one moment to a shower bath, and drown a conflagration in thirty seconds or thereabouts : nor could he rifle the place ; the goods were greatly protected by their weight, and it was impossible to get out of the store without raising an alarm, and being searched.

But, not to fall into the error of writers who underrate their readers' curiosity and intelligence, and so deluge them with comments and explanations, we will now simply relate what Wylie did, leaving you to glean his motives as this tale advances.

His jacket had large pockets, and he took out of them a bunch of eighteen bright steel keys, numbered, a set of new screw-drivers, a flask of rum, and two ship biscuits.

He unlocked the eighteen cases marked Proserpine, &c., and, peering in with his lantern, saw the gold dust and small ingots packed in parcels and surrounded by Australian wool of the highest possible quality. It was a luscious sight. He then proceeded to a heavier task ; he unscrewed, one after another, eighteen of the cases marked Shannon, and the eighteen so selected, perhaps by private marks, proved to be packed close, and on a

different system from the gold, viz., in pigs, or square blocks, three, or in some cases four, to each chest. Now, these two ways of packing the specie and the baser metal respectively, had the effect of producing a certain uniformity of weight in the thirty-six cases Wylie was inspecting: otherwise the gold cases would have been twice the weight of those that contained the baser metal: for lead is proverbially heavy, but under scientific tests is to gold as five to twelve, or thereabouts.

In his secret and mysterious labour Wylie was often interrupted. Whenever he heard a step on the pavement outside, he drew the slide of his lantern and hid the light. If he had examined the iron shutters, he would have seen that his light could never pierce through them into the street. But he was not aware of this. Notwithstanding these occasional interruptions, he worked so hard and continuously, that the perspiration poured down him ere he had unscrewed those eighteen chests containing the pigs of lead. However, it was done at last, and then he refreshed himself with a draught from his flask. The next thing was, he took the three pigs of lead out of one of the cases marked Shannon, &c., and numbered fifteen,

and laid them very gently on the floor. Then he transferred to that empty case the mixed contents of a case branded Proserpine 1, &c., and this he did with the utmost care and nicety, lest gold dust spilled should tell tales. And so he went on and shifted the contents of the whole eighteen cases marked Proserpine, &c., into eighteen cases marked Shannon, &c., and refilled them with the Shannon's lead. Frolicsome Mr. Wylie! Then he sat down on one of the cases Proserpine, and ate a biscuit and drank a little rum; not much: for at this part of his career he was a very sober man, though he could feign drunkenness, or anything else.

The gold was all at his mercy, yet he did not pocket an ounce of it; not even a penny-weight to make a wedding-ring for Nancy Rouse. Mr. Wylie had a conscience, and a very original one it was; and, above all, he was very true to those he worked with. He carefully locked the gold cases up again, and resumed the screw-driver, for there was another heavy stroke of work to be done; and he went at it like a man. He carefully screwed down again, one after another, all those eighteen cases marked Shannon, which he had filled with gold-dust, and then, heating a sailor's needle red-

hot over his burning wick, he put his own secret marks on those eighteen cases—marks that no eye but his own could detect. By this time, though a very powerful man, he felt much exhausted, and would gladly have snatched an hour's repose. But consulting his watch by the light of his lantern, he found the sun had just risen. He retired to his place of concealment in the same cat-like way he had come out of it—that is to say, he mounted on the high cases, and then slipped down behind them, into the angle of the wall.

As soon as the office opened, two sailors, whom he had carefully instructed over-night, came with a boat for the cases; the warehouse was opened in consequence, but they were informed that Wylie must be present at the delivery.

“Oh, he won't be long,” said they; “told us he would meet us here.”

There was a considerable delay, and a good deal of talking, and presently Wylie was at their backs, and put in his word.

Seaton was greatly surprised at finding him there, and asked him where he had sprung from.

“Me!” said Wylie, jocosely, “why, I hailed from Davy Jones's locker last.”

"I never heard you come in," said Seaton, thoughtfully.

"Well, sir," replied Wylie, civilly, "a man does learn to go like a cat on board ship, that is the truth. I came in at the door like my betters; but I thought I heard you mention my name, so I made no noise. Well, here I am, any way, and —Jack, how many trips can we take these thundering chests in? Let us see, eighteen for the Proserpine, and forty for the Shannon. Is that correct, sir?"

"Perfectly."

"Then, if you will deliver them, I'll check the delivery a-board the lighter there; and then we'll tow her alongside the ships."

Seaton called up two more clerks, and sent one to the boat, and one on board the barge. The barge was within hail; so the cases were checked as they passed out of the store, and checked again at the small boat, and also on board the lighter. When they were all cleared out, Wylie gave Seaton his receipt for them, and, having a steam-tug in attendance, towed the lighter alongside the Shannon first.

Seaton carried the receipt to his employer.

"But, sir," said he, "is this regular for an officer of the *Proserpine* to take the *Shannon's* cargo from us?"

"No, it is not regular," said the old gentleman; and he looked through a window, and summoned Mr. Hardcastle.

Hardcastle explained that the *Proserpine* shipped the gold, which was the more valuable consignment; and that he saw no harm in the officer, who was so highly trusted by the merchant (on this and on former occasions), taking out a few tons of lead and copper to the *Shannon*.

"Well, sir," said Seaton, "suppose I was to go out and see the chests stowed in those vessels?"

"I think you are making a fuss about nothing," said Hardcastle.

Mr. White was of the same opinion, but, being too wise to check zeal and caution, told Seaton he might go for his own satisfaction.

Seaton, with some difficulty, got a little boat and pulled across the harbour. He found the *Shannon* had shipped all the chests marked with her name; and the captain and mate of the *Proserpine* were beginning to ship theirs. He paddled under the *Proserpine's* stern.

Captain Hudson, a rough salt, sang out, and asked him roughly what he wanted there.

"Oh, it is all right," said the mate; "he is come for your receipt and Hewitt's. Be smart, now, men; two on board, sixteen to come."

Seaton saw the chests marked Proserpine stowed in the Proserpine, and went ashore with Captain Hewitt's receipt for forty cases on board the Shannon, and Captain Hudson's of eighteen on board the Proserpine.

As he landed he met Lloyd's agent, and told him what a valuable freight he had just shipped. That gentleman merely remarked that both ships were underwritten in Sydney by the owners; but the freight was insured in London, no doubt.

There was still something about this business Seaton did not quite like; perhaps it was in the haste of the shipments, or in the manner of the mate. At all events, it was too slight and subtle to be communicated to others with any hope of convincing them; and, moreover, Seaton could not but own to himself that he hated Wardlaw, and was, perhaps, no fair judge of his acts, and even of the acts of his servants.

And soon a blow fell that drove the matter out

of his head and his heart. Miss Helen Rolleston called at the office, and, standing within a few feet of him, handed Hardcastle a letter from Arthur Wardlaw, directing that the lady's cabin on board the Shannon should be placed at her disposal.

Hardcastle bowed low to Beauty and Station, and promised her the best possible accommodation on board the Shannon, bound for England next week.

As she retired, she cast one quiet glance round the office in search of Seaton's beard. But he had reduced its admired luxuriance, and trimmed it to a narrow mercantile point. She did not know his other features from Adam, and little thought that young man, bent double over his paper, was her preserver and *protégé*; still less that he was at this moment cold as ice, and quivering with misery from head to foot, because her own lips had just told him she was going to England in the Shannon.

Heart-broken, but still loving nobly, Seaton dragged himself down to the harbour, and went slowly on board the Shannon to secure Miss Rolleston every comfort.

Then, sick at heart as he was, he made inquiries into the condition of the vessel which was to be trusted with so precious a freight; and the old boatman who was rowing him, hearing him make these inquiries, told him he himself was always about, and had noticed the Shannon's pumps were going every blessed night.

Seaton carried this intelligence directly to Lloyd's agent; he overhauled the ship, and ordered her into the graving dock for repairs.

Then Seaton, for White & Co., wrote to Miss Rolleston that the Shannon was not seaworthy, and could not sail for a month, at the least.

The lady simply acknowledged Messrs. White's communication, and Seaton breathed again.

Wardlaw had made Miss Rolleston promise him faithfully to sail that month in his ship the Shannon. Now she was a slave to her word, and constant of purpose; so, when she found she could not sail in the Shannon, she called again on Messrs. White, and took her passage in the Proserpine. The essential thing to her mind was to sail when she had promised, and to go in a ship that belonged to her lover.

The Proserpine was to sail in ten days.

Seaton inquired into the state of the *Proserpine*. She was a good, sound vessel, and there was no excuse for detaining her.

Then he wrestled long and hard with the selfish part of his great love. Instead of turning sullen, he set himself to carry out Helen Rolleston's will. He went on board the *Proserpine* and chose her the best stern cabin.

General Rolleston had ordered Helen's cabin to be furnished, and the agent had put in the usual things, such as standing bedstead with drawers beneath, chest of drawers, small table, two chairs, wash-stand, looking-glass, and swinging lamp.

But Seaton made several visits to the ship, and effected the following arrangements at his own cost. He provided a neat cocoa-mat for her cabin-deck for comfort and foot-hold; he unshipped the regular six-paned stern windows, and put in single pane plate glass; he fitted venetian blinds, and hung two little rose-coloured curtains to each of the windows; all so arranged as to be easily removed in case it should be necessary to ship dead lights in heavy weather. He glazed the door leading to her bath-room and quarter gallery with plate glass; he provided a light, easy chair, slung and fitted with

grummets, to be hung on hooks screwed into the beams in the midship of the cabin. On this Helen could sit and read, and so become insensible to the motion of the ship. He fitted a small case of books, having a batten, secured from falling out by a button, which could be raised when a book might be wanted; he fixed a strike-bell in her maid's cabin, communicating with two strikers in Helen's cabin; he selected books, taking care that the voyages and travels were prosperous ones. No "Seaman's Recorder," "Life-boat Journal," or "Shipwrecks and Disasters in the British Navy."

Her cabin was the after-cabin on the starboard side: was entered through the cuddy; had a door communicating with the quarter gallery; two stern windows, and a dead-eye on deck. The maid's cabin was the port after-cabin; doors opened into cuddy and quarter gallery. And a fine trouble Miss Rolleston had to get a maid to accompany her; but at last a young woman offered to go with her for high wages, demurely suppressing the fact that she had just married one of the sailors, and would have gladly gone for nothing. Her name was Jane Holt, and her husband's Michael Donovan.

In one of Seaton's visits to the Proserpine he

detected the mate and the captain talking together, and looking at him with unfriendly eyes—scowling at him would hardly be too strong a word.

However, he was in no state of mind to care much how two animals in blue jackets received his acts of self-martyrdom. He was there to do the last kind offices of despairing love for the angel that had crossed his dark path, and illumined it for a moment, to leave it now for ever.

At last the fatal evening came ; her last in Sydney.

Then Seaton's fortitude, sustained no longer by the feverish stimulus of doing kindly acts for her, began to give way, and he desponded deeply.

At nine in the evening he crept upon General Rolleston's lawn, where he had first seen her. He sat down in sullen despair, upon the very spot.

Then he came nearer the house. There was a lamp in the dining room ; he looked in and saw her.

She was seated at her father's knee, looking up at him fondly ; her hand was in his. The tears were in their eyes : she had no mother ; he no son ; they loved one another devotedly. This, their tender gesture, and their sad silence, spoke volumes to any one that had known sorrow. Poor Seaton sat

down on the dewy grass outside, and wept, because she was weeping.

Her father sent her to bed early. Seaton watched, as he had often done before, till her light went out; and then he flung himself on the wet grass, and stared at the sky in utter misery.

The mind is often clearest in the middle of the night; and all of a sudden he saw, as if written on the sky, that she was going to England expressly to marry Arthur Wardlaw.

At this revelation he started up, stung with hate as well as love, and his tortured mind rebelled furiously. He repeated his vow that this should never be; and soon a scheme came into his head to prevent it; but it was a project so wild and dangerous, that, even as his heated brain hatched it, his cooler judgment said, "Fly, madman, fly! or this love will *destroy* you!"

He listened to the voice of reason, and in another minute he was out of the premises. He fluttered to his lodgings.

When he got there he could not go in; he turned and fluttered about the streets, not knowing or caring whither; his mind was in a whirl; and, what with his bodily fever, and his boiling heart, passion

began to overpower reason, that had held out so gallantly till now. He found himself at the harbour, staring with wild and blood-shot eyes at the Proserpine, he, who an hour ago, had seen that he had but one thing to do—to try and forget young Wardlaw's bride. He groaned aloud and ran wildly back into the town. He hurried up and down one narrow street, raging inwardly, like some wild beast in its den.

By-and by, his mood changed, and he hung round a lamp-post, and fell to moaning and lamenting his hard fate, and hers.

A policeman came up, took him for a maudlin drunkard, and half-advised, half-admonished him, to go home.

At that he gave a sort of fierce, despairing snarl, and ran into the next street, to be alone.

In this street he found a shop open, and lighted, though it was but five o'clock in the morning. It was a barber's, whose customers were working people. HAIR-CUTTING, SIXPENCE. EASY SHAVING, THREEPENCE. HOT COFFEE, FOURPENCE THE CUP. Seaton's eye fell upon this shop. He looked at it fixedly a moment from the opposite side of the way, and then hurried on.

He turned suddenly and came back. He crossed

the road and entered the shop. The barber was leaning over the stove, removing a can of boiling water from the fire to the hob. He turned at the sound of Seaton's step, and revealed an ugly countenance, rendered sinister by a squint.

Seaton dropped into a chair, and said, "I want my beard taken off."

The man looked at him, if it could be called looking *at* him, and said, drily, "Oh, do ye? How much am I to have for that job?"

"You know your own charge."

"Of course I do; three-pence a chin."

"Very well. Be quick then."

"Stop a bit: that is my charge to working folk. I must have something more off you."

"Very well, man, I'll pay you double."

"My price to you is ten shillings."

"Why, what is that for?" asked Seaton, in some alarm; he thought in his confusion, the man must have read his heart.

"I'll tell ye why," said the squinting barber. "No I won't; I'll show ye." He brought a small mirror, and suddenly clapped it before Seaton's eyes. Seaton started at his own image; wild, ghastly, and the eyes so blood-shot. The barber

chuckled. This start was an extorted compliment to his own sagacity. "Now wasn't I right?" said he; "did I ought to take the beard off such a mug as that—for less than ten shillings?"

"I see," groaned Seaton; "you think I have committed some crime. One man sees me weeping with misery; he calls me a drunkard: another sees me pale with the anguish of my breaking heart; he calls me a felon. May God's curse light on him and you, and all mankind!"

"All right," said the squinting barber, apathetically; "my price is ten bob, whether or no."

Seaton felt in his pockets. "I have not got the money about me," said he.

"Oh, I'm not particular; leave your watch."

Seaton handed this squinting vampire his watch without another word, and let his head fall upon his breast.

The barber cut his beard close with the scissors, and made trivial remarks from time to time; but received no reply.

At last, Extortion having put him in a good humour, he said, "Don't be so down-hearted, my lad. You are not the first that has got into trouble, and had to change faces."

Seaton vouchsafed no reply.

The barber shaved him clean, and was astonished at the change, and congratulated him. "Nobody will ever know you," said he; "and I'll tell you why; your mouth it is inclined to turn up a little; now a moustache it bends down, and that alters such a mouth as yours entirely. But, I'll tell you what, taking off this beard shows me something: *you are a gentleman*. Make it a sovereign, sir."

Seaton staggered out of the place without a word.

"Sulky, eh?" muttered the barber. He gathered up some of the long hair he had cut off Seaton's chin with his scissors, admired it, and put it away in paper.

While thus employed, a regular customer looked in for his cup of coffee. It was the policeman who had taken Seaton for a convivial soul.

CHAPTER VII.

GENERAL ROLLESTON'S servants made several trips to the Proserpine, carrying boxes, &c.

But Helen herself clung to the house till the last moment. "Oh, papa!" she cried, "I need all my resolution, all my good faith, to keep my word with Arthur, and leave you. Why, why did I promise? Why am I such a slave to my word?"

"Because," said the old General, with a voice not so firm as usual, "I have always told you that a lady is not to be inferior to a gentleman in any virtue, except courage. I've heard my mother say so often; and I've taught it to my Helen. And, my girl, where would be the merit of keeping our word, if we only kept it when it cost us nothing?"

He promised to come after, in three months at farthest; and the brave girl dried her tears, as well as she could, not to add to the sadness he fought

against as gallantly as he had often fought the enemies of his country.

The Proserpine was to sail at two o'clock: at a little before one, a gentleman boarded her, and informed the captain that he was a missionary, the Rev. John Hazel, returning home, after a fever; and wished to take a berth in the Proserpine.

The mate looked him full in the face; and then told him there was very little accommodation for passengers, and it had all been secured by White & Co., for a young lady and her servants.

Mr. Hazel replied that his means were small, and moderate accommodation would serve him; but he must go to England without delay.

Captain Hudson put in his gracious word; "Then jump off the jetty at high tide and swim there; no room for black coats in my ship."

Mr. Hazel looked from one to the other piteously. "Show me some mercy, gentlemen; my very life depends on it."

"Very sorry, sir," said the mate; "but it is impossible. There's the Shannon, you can go in her."

"But she is under repairs; so I am told."

"Well, there are a hundred and fifty carpenters

on to her; and she will come out of port in our wake."

"Now, sir," said Hudson, roughly, "bundle down the ship's side again, if you please; this is a busy time. Hy!—rig the whip; here's the lady coming off to us."

The missionary heaved a deep sigh, and went down into the boat that had brought him. But he was no sooner seated than he ordered the boatmen, somewhat peremptorily, to pull ashore as fast as they could row. His boat met the Rollestons, father and daughter, coming out, and he turned his pale face, and eyed them as he passed. Helen Rolleston was struck with that sorrowful countenance, and, when the boats had passed each other, she whispered her father, "That poor clergyman has just left the ship." She made sure he had been taking leave of some beloved one, bound for England. General Rolleston looked round, but the wan face was no longer visible.

They were soon on board, and received with great obsequiousness. Helen was shown her cabin, and, observing the minute and zealous care that had been taken of her comfort, she said, "Somebody, who loves me, has been here," and turned

her brimming eyes on her father. He looked a little puzzled, and said nothing.

Father and daughter were then left alone in the cabin, till the ship began to heave her anchor (she lay just at the mouth of the harbour), and then the boatswain was sent to give General Rolleston warning. Helen came up with him, pale and distressed. They exchanged a last embrace, and General Rolleston went down the ship's side. Helen hung over the bulwarks and waved her last adieu, though she could hardly see him for her tears.

At this moment a four-oared boat swept alongside; and Mr. Hazel came on board again. He presented Hudson a written order to give the Rev. John Hazel a passage in the small berth abreast the main hatches. It was signed "For White & Co., James Seaton;" and was endorsed with a stamped acknowledgment of the passage money, twenty-seven pounds.

Hudson and Wylie, the mate, put their heads together over this. The missionary saw them consulting, and told them he had mentioned their mysterious conduct to Messrs. White & Co., and that Mr. Seaton had promised to stop the ship

if their authority was resisted. "And I have paid my passage money, and will not be turned out now except by force," said the reverend gentleman, quietly.

Wylie's head was turned away from Mr. Hazel's, and on its profile a most gloomy, vindictive look, so much so, that Mr. Hazel was startled when the man turned his front face to him with a jolly, genial air, and said, "Well, sir, the truth is we seamen don't want passengers aboard ships of this class: they get in our way whenever it blows a capful. However, since you are here, make yourself as comfortable as you can."

"There, that is enough palaver," said the captain, in his offensive way. "Hoist the parson's traps aboard, and sheer off, you shore boat! Anchor's apeak."

He then gave his orders in stentorian roars; the anchor was hove up, catted, and fished; one sail went up after another, the Proserpine's head came round, and away she bore for England with a fair wind.

General Rolleston went slowly and heavily home, and often turned his head and looked wistfully at

the ship putting out wing upon wing, and carrying off his child like a tiny prey.

To change the comparison, it was only a tender vine detached from a great sturdy elm: yet the tree, thus relieved of its delicate encumbrance, felt bare; and a soft thing was gone, that, seeking protection, had bestowed warmth; had nestled and curled between the world's cold wind and that stalwart stem.

As soon as he got home he lighted a cigar, and set to work to console himself by reflecting that it was but a temporary parting, since he had virtually resigned his post, and was only waiting in Sydney till he should have handed his papers in order over to his successor, and settled one or two private matters that could not take three months.

When he had smoked his cigar, and reasoned away his sense of desolation, Nature put out her hand, and took him by the breast, and drew him gently up-stairs to take a look at his beloved daughter's bed-room, by way of seeing the last of her.

The room had one window looking north and another west: the latter commanded a view of the

bay. General Rolleston looked down at the floor, littered with odds and ends—the dead leaves of dress that fall about a lady in the great process of packing—and then gazed through the window at the flying Proserpine.

He sighed, and lighted another cigar. Before he had half finished it, he stooped down and took up a little bow of ribbon that lay on the ground, and put it quietly in his bosom. In this act he was surprised by Sara Wilson, who had come up to sweep all such waifs and strays into her own box. “La, sir,” said she, rather crossly, “why didn’t you tell me, and I’d have tidied the room: it is all hugger-mugger, with miss a leaving.”

And with this she went to tidying the room. General Rolleston’s eye followed her movements, and he observed amongst the litter a white handkerchief stained with blood. “What!” said he, “has she had an accident; cut her finger?”

“No, sir,” said Wilson, and with a certain air of restraint that made him uneasy.

He examined the girl’s face narrowly, and then the handkerchief; the blood was of a pale red colour. Rolleston had seen a similarly stained handkerchief fifteen years before, in the hands

of his young wife a few months before she died of consumption.

"Sara," faltered Rolleston, "in God's name, why was I never told of this?"

"Indeed, sir," said Wilson, eagerly, "you must not blame me, sir. It was as much as my place was worth to tell you. Miss is a young lady that will be obeyed; and she give me strict orders not to let you know: but she is gone now; and I always thought it was a pity she kept it so dark; but as I was saying, sir, she *would* be obeyed."

"Kept what so dark?"

"Why, sir, her spitting of blood at times: and turning so thin by what she used to be, poor dear young lady."

General Rolleston groaned aloud. He said no more, but kept looking bewildered and helpless, first at the handkerchief and then at the Proserpine that was carrying Helen away, perhaps for ever: and his iron features worked with cruel distress; anguish so mute and male, that the woman Wilson, though not good for much, sat down and shed genuine tears of pity.

But he summoned all his fortitude, told Wilson he could not say she was to blame, she had but

obeyed her mistress's orders; and we must all obey orders. "But now," said he, "it is me you ought to obey: tell me, does any doctor attend her?"

"None ever comes here, sir. But, one day, she let fall that she went to Dr. Valentine, him that has the name for disorders of the chest."

In a very few minutes General Rolleston was at Doctor Valentine's house, and asked him bluntly what was the matter with his daughter.

"Disease of the lungs," said the doctor, simply.

The unhappy father then begged the doctor to give him his real opinion as to the degree of danger; and Dr. Valentine told him, with some feeling, that the case was not desperate, but was certainly alarming.

Remonstrated with for letting the girl undertake a sea voyage, he replied rather evasively at first; that the air of Australia disagreed with his patient, and a sea voyage was more likely to do her good than harm.

General Rolleston pressed the doctor's hand, and went away without another word.

Only he hurried his matters of business; and took his passage in the Shannon.

It was in something of a warrior's spirit that he prepared to follow his daughter and protect her; but often he sighed at the invisible, insidious nature of the foe, and wished it could have been a fair fight of bullets and bayonets, and his own the life at stake.

The Shannon was soon ready for sea.

Wardlaw was at home before this, with his hands full of business; and it is time the reader should be let into one secret at least, which this merchant had contrived to conceal from the City of London, and from his own father, and from every human creature, except one poor, simple, devoted soul, called Michael Penfold.

There are men, who seem stupid, yet generally go right; there are also clever men, who appear to have the art of blundering wisely: "*sapienter descendunt in infernum*," as the ancients have it; and some of these latter will even lie on their backs, after a fall, and lift up their voices, and prove to you that in the nature of things they ought to have gone up, and their being down is monstrous; illusory.

Arthur Wardlaw was not quite so clever as all

that; but still he misconducted the business of the firm with perfect ability from the first month he entered on it. Like those ambitious railways, which ruin a goodly trunk with excess of branches, not to say twigs, he set to work extending, and extending, and sent the sap of the healthy old concern a-flying to the ends of the earth.

He was not only too ambitious, and not cool enough; he was also unlucky, or under a curse, or something; for things, well conceived, broke down, in his hands, under petty accidents. And, besides, his new correspondents and agents hit him cruelly hard. Then what did he? Why, shot good money after bad, and lost both. He could not retrench, for his game was concealment; his father was kept in the dark, and drew his four thousand a year, as usual, and, upon any hesitation in that respect, would have called in an accountant and wound up the concern. But this tax upon the receipts, though inconvenient, was a trifle compared with the series of heavy engagements that were impending. The future was so black, that Wardlaw junior was sore tempted to realise twenty thousand pounds, which a man in his position could easily do, and fly the country. But this would have been to give up

Helen Rolleston; and he loved her too well. His brain was naturally subtle and fertile in expedients; so he brought all its powers to bear on a double problem: how to marry Helen; and restore the concern he had mismanaged to its former state. For this, a large sum of money was needed, not less than £90,000.

The difficulties were great; but he entered on this project with two advantages. In the first place, he enjoyed excellent credit; in the second, he was not disposed to be scrupulous. He had been cheated several times; and nothing undermines feeble rectitude more than that. Such a man as Wardlaw is apt to establish a sort of account current with humanity.

“Several fellow-creatures have cheated me. Well, I must get as much back, by hook or by crook, from several fellow-creatures.”

After much hard thought, he conceived his double master-stroke: and it was to execute this he went out to Australia.

We have seen that he persuaded Helen Rolleston to come to England and be married; but, as to the other part of his project, that is a matter for the reader to watch, as it developes itself.

His first act of business, on reaching England, was to insure the freights of the *Proserpine* and the *Shannon*.

He sent Michael Penfold to Lloyd's, with the requisite vouchers, including the receipts of the gold merchants. Penfold easily insured the *Shannon*, whose freight was valued at only six thousand pounds. The *Proserpine*, with her cargo, and a hundred and thirty thousand pounds of specie to boot, was another matter. Some underwriters had an objection to specie, being subject to theft as well as shipwreck; other underwriters, applied to by Penfold, acquiesced; others called on Wardlaw himself, to ask a few questions, and he replied to them courteously, but with a certain nonchalance, treating it as an affair which might be big to them, but was not of particular importance to a merchant doing business on his scale.

To one underwriter, Condell, with whom he was on somewhat intimate terms, he said, "I wish I could insure the *Shannon*, at her value; but that is impossible: the City of London could not do it. The *Proserpine* brings me some cases of specie, but my true treasure is on board the *Shannon*. She carries my bride, sir."

“ Oh indeed ! Miss Rolleston ? ”

“ Ah, I remember ; you have seen her. Then you will not be surprised at a proposal I shall make you. Underwrite the Shannon a million pounds, to be paid by you if harm befalls my Helen. You need not look so astonished ; I was only joking ; you gentlemen deal with none but substantial values ; and, as for me, a million would no more compensate me for losing her, than for losing my own life.”

The tears were in his pale eyes as he said these words ; and Mr. Condell eyed him with sympathy. But he soon recovered himself, and was the man of business again. “ Oh, the specie on board the Proserpine ? Well, I was in Australia, you know, and bought that specie myself of the merchants whose names are attached to the receipts. I deposited the cases with White & Co., at Sydney. Penfold will show you the receipt. I instructed Joseph Wylie, mate of the Proserpine, and a trustworthy person, to see them stowed away in the Proserpine, by White & Co. Hudson is a good seaman ; and the Proserpine a new ship, built by Mare. We have nothing to fear but the ordinary perils of the sea.”

“So one would think,” said Mr. Condell, and took his leave; but, at the door, he hesitated, and then, looking down a little sheepishly, said, “Mr. Wardlaw, may I offer you a piece of advice?”

“Certainly.”

“Then, double the insurance on the Shannon, if you can.”

With these words he slipped out, evidently to avoid questions he did not intend to answer.

Wardlaw stared after him, stupidly at first, and then stood up and put his hand to his head in a sort of amazement. Then he sat down again, ashy pale, and with the dew on his forehead, and muttered faintly, “Double—the insurance—of the—Shannon!”

Men who walk in crooked paths are very subject to such surprises; doomed, like Ahab, to be pierced, through the joints of their armour, by random shafts; by words uttered in one sense, but conscience interprets them in another.

It took a good many underwriters to insure the Proserpine's freight; but the business was done at last.

Then Wardlaw, who had feigned insouciance so

admirably in that part of his interview with Condell, went, without losing an hour, and raised a large sum of money on the insured freight, to meet the bills that were coming due for the gold (for he had paid for most of it in paper at short dates), and also other bills that were approaching maturity. This done, he breathed again, safe for a month or two from everything short of a general panic, and full of hope from his coming master-stroke. But two months soon pass when a man has a flock of kites in the air. Pass? They fly. So now he looked out anxiously for his Australian ships; and went to Lloyd's every day to hear if either had been seen, or heard of by steamers, or by faster sailing vessels than themselves.

And, though Condell had underwritten the Proserpine to the tune of £8,000, yet still his mysterious words rang strangely in the merchant's ears and made him so uneasy, that he employed a discreet person to sound Condell as to what he meant by "double the insurance of the Shannon."

It turned out to be the simplest affair in the world; Condell had secret information that the Shannon was in bad repair; so he had advised his friend to insure her heavily. For the same

reason, he declined to underwrite her freight himself.

With respect to those ships, our readers already know two things, of which Wardlaw himself, *nota bene*, had no idea; namely, that the Shannon had sailed last, instead of first, and that Miss Rolleston was not on board of her, but in the Proserpine, two thousand miles ahead.

To that, your superior knowledge, we, posters of the sea and land, are about to make a large addition, and relate things strange, but true. While that anxious and plotting merchant strains his eyes seaward, trying hard to read the future, we carry you, in a moment of time, across the Pacific, and board the leading vessel, the good ship Proserpine, homeward bound.

The ship left Sydney with a fair wind, but soon encountered adverse weather, and made slow progress, being close hauled, which was her worst point of sailing. She pitched a good deal, and that had a very ill effect on Miss Rolleston. She was not sea-sick, but thoroughly out of sorts; and, in one week, became perceptibly paler and thinner than when she started.

The young clergyman, Mr. Hazel, watched her

with respectful anxiety, and this did not escape her feminine observation. She noted quietly that those dark eyes of his followed her with a mournful tenderness, but withdrew their gaze when she looked at him. Clearly, he was interested in her, but had no desire to intrude upon her attention. He would bring up the squabs for her, and some of his own wraps, when she stayed on deck, and was prompt with his arm when the vessel lurched; and showed her those other little attentions, which are called for on board ship; but without a word. Yet, when she thanked him in the simplest and shortest way, his great eyes flashed with pleasure, and the colour mounted to his very temples.

Engaged young ladies are, for various reasons, more sociable with the other sex, than those who are still on the universal mock-defensive; a ship, like a distant country, thaws even English reserve, and women in general are disposed to admit ecclesiastics to certain privileges. No wonder then that Miss Rolleston, after a few days, met Mr. Hazel half-way; and they made acquaintance on board the *Proserpine*; in monosyllables at first; but, the ice once fairly broken, the intercourse of mind became rather rapid.

At first it was a mere intellectual exchange, but one very agreeable to Miss Rolleston; for a fine memory, and omnivorous reading from his very boyhood, with the habit of taking notes, and reviewing them, had made Mr. Hazel a walking dictionary, and a walking essayist if required.

But, when it came to something, which most of all the young lady had hoped from this temporary acquaintance, viz., religious instruction, she found him indeed as learned on that as on other topics, but cold, and devoid of unction: so much so, that one day she said to him, "I can hardly believe you have ever been a missionary." But at that he seemed so distressed, that she was sorry for him, and said, sweetly, "Excuse me, Mr. Hazel, my remark was in rather bad taste, I fear."

"Not at all," said he. "Of course I am unfit for missionary work, or I should not be here."

Miss Rolleston took a good look at him, but said nothing. However, his reply and her perusal of his countenance, satisfied her that he was a man with very little petty vanity and petty irritability.

Day succeeded day, with a monotony which had been unendurable to Helen but for the variety she found in her fellow-passenger. The true modesty

of learning made his mind, like a library, mute until consulted. Shallow streams are garrulous. She had studied botany; she observed that he was studious to conceal that he was her master in that science. A conversation between him and the ship's surgeon, drew from the latter an expression of surprise to find the clergyman's knowledge of chemistry, exceeded his own. Helen did not understand a word of the discussion, but she read the faces of the two men, and saw which was out of his depth.

One morning, after ten days' murky weather, the sky suddenly cleared, and a rare opportunity occurred to take an observation. Hazel suggested to Wylie, the mate, the propriety of taking advantage of the moment, as the fog bank out of which they had just emerged, would soon envelope them again, and they had not more than an hour or so of such weather available. The man gave a shuffling answer. So Hazel sought the captain in his cabin. He found him in bed. He was dead drunk.

On a shelf lay the instruments. These Hazel took, and then looked round for the chronometers. They were safely locked in their cases.

He carried the instruments on deck, together with

a book of Tables, and quietly began to make preparations, at which Wylie, arresting his walk, gazed with utter astonishment.

“Now, Mr. Wylie, I want the key of the chronometer cases.”

“Here is a chronometer, Mr. Hazel,” said Helen, very innocently, “if that is all you want.”

Hazel smiled, and explained that a ship’s clock is made to keep the most exact time; that he did not require the time of the spot where they were, but Greenwich time.

He took the watch, however. It was a large one for a lady to carry; but it was one of Frodsham’s masterpieces—for was it not Arthur Wardlaw’s gift?

“Why, Miss Rolleston,” said he, “this watch must be two hours slow. It marks ten o’clock; it is now nearly midday. Ah, I see,” he added, with a smile, “you have wound it regularly every day; but you have forgotten to set it daily. Indeed, you may be right; it would be a useless trouble, since we change our longitude hourly. Well, let us presume that this watch shows the exact time at Sydney, as I presume it does; I can work the ship’s reckoning from that meridian, instead of that of Greenwich.’

And he set about doing it. He looked up, and saw that the crew were assembling as near the quarter-deck as discipline permitted.

“Mr. Wylie, would you kindly obtain a chart for me?”

The mate betrayed some curiosity at first; but now, when he perceived that the crew had become witnesses of the captain's incapacity to fulfil this important duty, he answered doggedly,—

“I think, sir, you took a great liberty in overhauling the skipper's books and tackle.”

“We have not had an observation for ten days. Surely it is necessary to find the position of the ship,” remonstrated Hazel.

“He'll make you find yours, when he comes on deck,” muttered the man.

Hazel stepped up to him and whispered,—

“The captain is drunk, senselessly drunk. Do not compel me to remember the fact, and report it at Lloyd's, and to the owners, when we arrive in England.”

Wylie gazed stupidly for a moment into Hazel's face, and then shuffled off and disappeared into the captain's cabin. In a few moments he emerged with the chronometers and the charts, bearing also

the thanks of Captain Hudson, who was down with bilious fever. Hazel received the message and the instruments without remark. He verified Miss Rolleston's chronometer, and allowing for difference of time, found it to be accurate. He returned it to her, and proceeded to work on the chart. The men looked on; so did Wylie. After a few moments Hazel read as follows:—West longitude, $146^{\circ} 53' 18''$. South latitude, $35^{\circ} 24'$. The Island of Oparo and the Four Crowns, distant 420 miles on the N.N.E. The white banks of fog prevailing on the south seem to indicate ice-floes in that quarter; Barometer — Thermometer in the sea as compared with yesterday, —. "There," said he, handing the paper to Wylie, "I leave these to be filled in by the captain. I presume he keeps some such record in his log."

Wylie removed the instruments, the men retired to the fore-castle, and Miss Rolleston fixed her large soft eyes on the young clergyman with the undisguised admiration a woman is apt to feel for what she does not understand.

One day they were discoursing of gratitude; and Mr. Hazel said he had a poor opinion of those persons, who speak of "the burden of gratitude," and

make a fuss about being "laid under an obligation."

"As for me," said he, "I have owed such a debt, and found the sense of it very sweet."

"But perhaps you were always hoping to make a return," said Helen.

"That I was: hoping against hope."

"Do you think people are grateful, in general?"

"No, Miss Rolleston, I do not."

"Well, I think they are. To me, at least. Why, I have experienced gratitude, even in a convict. It was a poor man, who had been transported, for something or other, and he begged Papa to take him for his gardener. Papa did, and he was so grateful that, do you know, he suspected our house was to be robbed, and he actually watched in the garden night after night: and, what do you think? the house *was* attacked by a whole gang; but poor Mr. Seaton confronted them and shot one, and was wounded cruelly; but he beat them off for us; and was not that gratitude?"

While she was speaking so earnestly Mr. Hazel's blood seemed to run through his veins like heavenly fire, but he said nothing, and the lady resumed, with gentle fervour: "Well, we got him a clerk's

place in a shipping-office, and heard no more of him; but he did not forget us: my cabin here was fitted up with every comfort and every delicacy. I thanked Papa for it; but he looked so blank, I saw directly he knew nothing about it; and now, I think of it, it was Mr. Seaton. I am positive it was. Poor fellow! And I should not even know him if I saw him."

Mr. Hazel observed, in a low voice, that Mr. Seaton's conduct did not seem wonderful to him. "Still," said he, "one is glad to find there is some good left even in a criminal."

"A criminal!" cried Helen Rolleston, firing up. "Pray, who says he was a criminal? Mr. Hazel, once for all, no friend of mine ever deserves such a name as that. A friend of mine may commit some great error or imprudence; but that is all. The poor grateful soul was never guilty of any downright wickedness: *that stands to reason.*"

Mr. Hazel did not encounter this feminine logic with his usual ability; he muttered something or other, with a trembling lip, and left her so abruptly, that she asked herself whether she had inadvertently said anything that could have offended him; and awaited an explanation. But none came. The

topic was never revived by Mr. Hazel; and his manner, at their next meeting, showed he liked her none the worse that she stood up for her friends.

The wind steady from the West for two whole days, and the Proserpine showed her best sailing qualities, and ran four hundred and fifty miles in that time.

Then came a dead calm, and the sails flapped lazily, and the masts described an arc; and the sun broiled; and the sailors whistled; and the captain drank; and the mate encouraged him.

During this calm, Miss Rolleston fell downright ill, and quitted the deck. Then Mr. Hazel was very sad: borrowed all the books in the ship, and read them, and took notes; and when he had done this, he was at leisure to read men, and so began to study Hiram Hudson, Joseph Wylie, and others, and take a few notes about them.

From these we select some that are better worth the reader's attention, than anything we could relate in our own persons at this stagnant part of the story.

PASSAGES FROM MR. HAZEL'S DIARY.

"Characters on board the Proserpine.

"There are two sailors, messmates, who have formed an antique friendship; their names are John Welch, and Samuel Cooper. Welch is a very able seaman and a chatterbox. Cooper is a good sailor, but very silent; only what he does say is much to the purpose.

"The gabble of Welch is agreeable to the silent Cooper; and Welch admires Cooper's taciturnity.

"I asked Welch what made him like Cooper so much. And he said, 'Why, you see, sir, he is my messmate, for one thing, and a seaman that knows his work; and then he has been well eddycated, and he knows when to hold his tongue, does Sam.'

"I asked Cooper why he was so fond of Welch. He only grunted in an uneasy way at first; but when I pressed for a reply, he let out two words—'Capital company.' And got away from me.

"Their friendship, though often roughly expressed, is really a tender and touching sentiment. I think either of these sailors would bare his back and take a dozen lashes in place of his messmate.

I too once thought I had made such a friend.
Eheu!

“Both Cooper and Welch seem, by their talk, to consider the ship a living creature. Cooper chews. Welch only smokes, and often lets his pipe out: he is so voluble.

“Captain Hudson is quite a character: or, I might say, two characters; for he is one man when he is sober, and another when he is the worse for liquor: and that I am sorry to see is very often. Captain Hudson, sober, is a rough, bearish seaman, with a quick, experienced eye, that takes in every rope in the ship, as he walks up and down his quarter-deck. He either evades, or bluntly declines conversation, and gives his whole mind to sailing his ship.

“Captain Hudson, drunk, is a garrulous man, who seems to have drifted back into the past. He comes up to you and talks of his own accord, and always about himself, and what he did fifteen or twenty years since. He forgets whatever has occurred half-an-hour ago; and his eye, which was an eagle’s, is now a mole’s. He no longer sees what his sailors are doing alow or aloft; to be sure he no longer cares; his present ship may take care of

herself while he is talking of his past ones. But the surest indicia of inebriety in Hudson are these two. First, his nose is red. Secondly, he discourses upon a seaman's *duty to his employers*. Ebrius rings the changes on his 'duty to his employers' till drowsiness attacks his hearers. Cicero de Officiis was all very well at a certain period of one's life: but 'bibulus nauta de officiis' is rather too much.

"N.B. Except when his nose is red, not a word about his 'duty to his employers.' That phrase, like a fine lady, never ventures into the morning air. It is purely post-prandial, and sacred to occasions when he is utterly neglecting his duty to his employers, and to everybody else.

"All this is ridiculous enough, but somewhat alarming. To think that *her* precious life should be entrusted to the care and skill of so unreliable a captain!

"Joseph Wylie, the mate, is less eccentric, but even more remarkable. He is one of those powerfully built fellows, whom Nature, one would think, constructed to gain all their ends by force and directness. But no such thing; he goes about as softly as a cat; is always popping up out of holes

and corners; and I can see he watches me, and tries to hear what I say to her. He is civil to me when I speak to him; yet, I notice, he avoids me quietly. Altogether, there is something about him that puzzles me. Why was he so reluctant to let me on board as a passenger? Why did he tell a downright falsehood? For he said there was no room for me; yet, even now, there are two cabins vacant, and he has taken possession of them.

“The mate of this ship has several barrels of spirits in his cabin, or rather, cabins, and it is he who makes the captain drunk. I learned this from one of the boys. This looks ugly. I fear Wylie is a bad, designing man, who wishes to ruin the captain, and so get his place. But, meantime, the ship might be endangered by this drunkard’s misconduct. I shall watch Wylie closely, and perhaps put the captain on his guard against this false friend.

“Last night, a breeze got up about sunset, and H—— R—— came on deck for half an hour. I welcomed her as calmly as I could; but I felt my voice tremble and my heart throb. She told me the voyage tired her much; but it was the last she

should have to make. How strange, how hellish (God forgive me for saying so!) it seems that *she* should love *him*. But, does she love him? Can she love him? Could she love him if she knew all? Know him she shall before she marries him. For the present, be still, my heart.

“She soon went below and left me desolate. I wandered all about the ship, and, at last, I came upon the inseparables, Welch and Cooper. They were squatted on the deck, and Welch’s tongue was going as usual. He was talking about this Wylie, and saying that, in all his ships, he had never known such a mate as this; why the captain was under his thumb. He then gave a string of captains, each of whom would have given his mate a round dozen at the gangway, if he had taken so much on him, as this one does.

“‘Grog!’ suggested Cooper, in extenuation.

“Welch admitted Wylie was liberal with that, and friendly enough with the men; but, still, he preferred to see a ship commanded by the captain, and not by a lubber like Wylie.

“I expressed some surprise at this term, and said I had envied Wylie’s nerves in a gale of wind we encountered early in the voyage.

“ The talking sailor explained, ‘ In course, he has been to sea afore this, and weathered many a gale. But so has the cook. That don’t make a man a sailor. You ask him how to send down a to’-gallant yard, or gammon a bowsprit, or even mark a lead line, and he’ll stare at ye, like Old Nick, when the angel caught him with the red-hot tongs, and questioned him out of the Church Catechism. Ask Sam there, if ye don’t believe me. Sam, what do you think of this Wylie for a seaman ? ’

“ Cooper could not afford anything so precious, in his estimate of things, as a word ; but he lifted a great brawny hand, and gave a snap with his finger and thumb, that disposed of the mate’s pretensions to seamanship more expressively than words could have done it.

“ The breeze has freshened, and the ship glides rapidly through the water, bearing us all homeward. H—— R—— has resumed her place upon the deck ; and all seems bright again. I ask myself how we existed without the sight of her.

“ This morning the wind shifted to the southwest ; the captain surprised us by taking in sail.

But his sober eye had seen something more than ours; for at noon it blew a gale, and by sunset it was deemed prudent to bring the ship's head to the wind, and we are now lying-to. The ship lurches, and the wind howls through the bare rigging; but she rides buoyantly, and no danger is apprehended.

“ Last night, as I lay in my cabin, unable to sleep, I heard some heavy blows strike the ship's side repeatedly, causing quite a vibration. I felt alarmed, and went out to tell the captain. But I was obliged to go on my hands and knees, such was the force of the wind. Passing the mate's cabin, I heard sounds that made me listen acutely; and I then found the blows were being struck inside the ship. I got to the captain and told him. ‘ Oh,’ said he, ‘ ten to one it's the mate nailing down his chests, or the like.’ But I assured him the blows struck the side of the ship, and, at my earnest request, he came out and listened. He swore a great oath, and said the lubber would be through the ship's side. He then tried the cabin door, but it was locked.

“ The sounds ceased directly.

“ We called to the mate, but received no reply

for a long time. At last Wylie came out of the gun-room, looking rather pale, and asked what was the matter.

“I told him he ought to know best, for the blows were heard where he had just come from.”

“‘Blows!’ said he; ‘I believe you. Why, a tierce of butter had got adrift, and was bumping up and down the hold like thunder.’ He then asked us whether that was what we had disturbed him for, entered his cabin, and almost slammed the door in our faces.

“I remarked to the captain on his disrespectful conduct. The captain was civil, and said I was right; he was a cross-grained, unmanageable brute, and he wished he was out of the ship. ‘But you see, sir, he has got the ear of the merchant ashore; and so I am obliged to hold a candle to the devil, as the saying is.’ He then fired a volley of oaths and abuse at the offender; and, not to encourage foul language, I retired to my cabin.

“The wind declined towards day-break, and the ship recommenced her voyage at 8 A.M.; but under treble reefed topsails, and reefed courses.

“I caught the captain and mate talking together in the friendliest way possible. That Hudson is a

humbug; there is some mystery between him and the mate.

“To-day H—— R—— was on deck for several hours, conversing sweetly, and looking like the angel she is. But happiness soon flies from me: a steamer came in sight, bound for Sydney. She signalled us to heave-to, and send a boat. This was done, and the boat brought back a letter for her. It seems they took us for the Shannon, in which ship she was expected.

“The letter was from *him*. How her cheek flushed and her eye beamed as she took it. And oh the sadness, the agony, that stood beside her unheeded.

“I left the deck; I could not have contained myself. What a thing is wealth! By wealth, that wretch can stretch out his hand across the ocean, and put a letter into her hand under my very eye. Away goes all that I have gained by being near her, while he is far away. He is not in England now—he is here. His odious presence has driven me from her. Oh that I could be a child again, or in my grave, to get away from this Hell of Love and Hate.”

At this point, we beg leave to take the narrative into our own hands again.

Mr. Hazel actually left the deck to avoid the sight of Helen Rolleston's flushed cheek and beaming eyes, reading Arthur Wardlaw's letter.

And here we may as well observe that he retired not merely because the torture was hard to bear. He had some disclosures to make, on reaching England ; but his good sense told him this was not the time, or the place, to make them, nor Helen Rolleston the person to whom, in the first instance, they ought to be made.

While he tries to relieve his swelling heart by putting its throbs on paper (and, in truth, this is some faint relief, for want of which many a less unhappy man than Hazel has gone mad), let us stay by the lady's side, and read her letter with her.

“ RUSSELL SQUARE,

“ *Dec. 15th, 1864.*

“ MY DEAR LOVE,—Hearing that the Antelope steam-packet was going to Sydney, by way of Cape Horn, I have begged the captain, who is under some obligations to me, to keep a good look-out for the Shannon, homeward bound, and board her with these lines, weather permitting.

“Of course, the chances are you will not receive them at sea; but still you possibly may; and my heart is so full of you, I seize any excuse for overflowing; and then I picture to myself that bright face reading an unexpected letter in mid ocean, and so I taste beforehand the greatest pleasure my mind can conceive—the delight of giving you pleasure, my own sweet Helen.

“News, I have very little. You know how deeply and devotedly you are beloved—know it so well that I feel words are almost wasted in repeating it. Indeed, the time, I hope, is at hand when the word love will hardly be mentioned between us. For my part, I think it will be too visible in every act, and look, and word of mine, to need repetition. We do not speak much about the air we live in. We breathe it, and speak with it, not of it.

“I suppose all lovers are jealous. I think I should go mad if you were to give me a rival; but then I do not understand that ill-natured jealousy which would rob the beloved object of all affections but the one. I know my Helen loves her father—loves him, perhaps, as well, or better, than she does me. Well, in spite of that, I love him too. Do you know, I never see that erect form, that model of

courage and probity come into a room, but I say to myself, ‘ Here comes my benefactor ; but for this man there would be no Helen in the world.’ Well, dearest, an unexpected circumstance has given me a little military influence (these things do happen in the City); and I really believe that, what with his acknowledged merits (I am secretly informed that a very high personage said, the other day, he had not received justice), and the influence I speak of, a post will shortly be offered to your father, that will enable him to live, henceforth, in England, with comfort, I might say, affluence. Perhaps he might live with us. That depends upon himself.

“ Looking forward to this, and my own still greater happiness, diverts my mind awhile from the one ever-pressing anxiety. But, alas ! it will return. By this time my Helen is on the seas, the terrible, the treacherous, the cruel seas, that spare neither beauty nor virtue, nor the longing hearts at home. I have conducted this office for some years, and thought I knew care and anxiety ; but I find I knew neither till now.

“ I have two ships at sea, the Shannon and the Proserpine. The Proserpine carries eighteen chests of specie, worth a hundred and sixty thousand

pounds. I don't care one straw whether she sinks or swims. But the Shannon carries my darling; and every gust at night awakens me, and every day I go into the great room at Lloyd's and watch the anemometer. Oh God! be merciful, and bring my angel safe to me! Oh God! be just, and strike her not for my offences!

"Besides the direct perils of the sea are some others you might escape by prudence. Pray avoid the night air, for my sake, who could not live if any evil befell you; and be careful in your diet. You were not looking so well as usual, when I left. Would I had words to make you know your own value. Then you would feel it a *duty* to be prudent.

"But I must not sadden you with my fears; let me turn to my hopes. How bright they are; what joy, what happiness, is sailing towards me, nearer and nearer every day. I ask myself what am I that such paradise should be mine.

"My love, when we are one, shall we share every thought, or shall I keep commerce, speculation, and its temptations away from your pure spirit? Sometimes I think I should like to have neither thought nor occupation unshared by you; and that you would purify trade itself by your contact; at other times I

say to myself, ' Oh, never soil that angel with your miserable business ; but go home to her as if you were going from earth to heaven, for a few blissful hours.' But you shall decide this question, and every other.

" Must I close this letter ? Must I say no more, though I have scarcely begun ?

" Yes, I will end it, since, perhaps, you will never see it.

" When I have sealed it, I mean to hold it in my clasped hands, and so pray the Almighty to take it safe to you, and to bring you safe to him, who can never know peace nor joy till he sees you once more.

" Your devoted and anxious lover,

" ARTHUR WARDLAW."

Helen Rolleston read this letter more than once. She liked it none the less for being disconnected and unbusiness-like. She had seen her Arthur's business letters ; models of courteous conciseness. She did not value such compositions. This one she did. She smiled over it, all beaming and blushing ; she kissed it, and read it again, and sat with it in her lap.

But, by-and-by, her mood changed, and, when Mr. Hazel ventured upon deck again, he found her with her forehead sinking on her extended arm, and the lax hand of that same arm holding the letter. She was crying.

The whole drooping attitude was so lovely, so feminine, yet so sad, that Hazel stood irresolute, looking wistfully at her.

She caught sight of him, and, by a natural impulse, turned gently away, as if to hide her tears. But, the next moment, she altered her mind, and said, with a quiet dignity that came naturally to her at times, "Why should I hide my care from you, sir? Mr. Hazel, may I speak to you *as a clergyman?*"

"Certainly," said Mr. Hazel, in a somewhat faint voice.

She pointed to a seat, and he sat down near her.

She was silent for some time; her lip quivered a little; she was struggling inwardly for that decent composure, which, on certain occasions, distinguishes the lady from the mere woman; and it was with a pretty firm voice she said what follows:—

"I am going to tell you a little secret, one I have

kept from my own father. It is—that I have not very long to live.”

Her hazel eye rested calmly on his face while she said these words quietly.

He received them with amazement, at first; amazement, that soon deepened into horror. “What do you mean?” he gasped. “What words are these?”

“Thank you for minding so much,” said she, sweetly. “I will tell you. I have fits of coughing, not frequent, but violent; and then blood very often comes from my lungs. That is a bad sign, you know. I have been so for four months now, and I am a good deal wasted; my hand used to be very plump, look at it now.—Poor Arthur!”

She turned away her head to drop a gentle unselfish tear or two; and Hazel stared with increasing alarm at the lovely, but wasted hand she still held out to him, and glanced, too, at Arthur Wardlaw’s letter, held slightly by the beloved fingers.

He said nothing, and, when she looked round again, he was pale and trembling. The revelation was so sudden.

“Pray be calm, sir,” said she. “We need speak

of this no more. But, now, I think, you will not be surprised that I come to you for religious advice and consolation, short as our acquaintance is."

"I am in no condition to give them," said Hazel, in great agitation. "I can think of nothing but how to save you. May heaven help me and give me wisdom for that."

"This is idle," said Helen Rolleston, gently, but firmly. "I have had the best advice for months, and I get worse ; and, Mr. Hazel, I shall never be better. My mother died at my age, and of the same fatal disorder. So aid me to bow to the will of Heaven. Sir, I do not repine at leaving the world ; but it does grieve me to think how my departure will affect those whose happiness is very, very dear to me. Especially it will affect one who now is awaiting my arrival in England. But I feel I shall never reach home. Well, you will see him when he comes on board this ship only to hear—to find——." She stopped—her face fell until it touched the paper.

She then looked at the letter, blushed, and hesitated a moment ; but ended by giving it to him whom she had applied to as her religious adviser. It was wet with tears.

“Oblige me by reading that. And when you have, I think you will grant me a favour I wish to ask you. Poor fellow! so full of hopes that I am doomed to disappoint.”

She rose to hide her emotion, and left Arthur Wardlaw's letter in the hands of him who loved her, if possible, more devotedly than Arthur Wardlaw did; and she walked the deck pensively, little dreaming how strange a thing she had done.

As for Hazel, he was in a situation poignant with agony; only the heavy blow that had just fallen had stunned and benumbed him. He felt a natural repugnance to read this letter. But she had given him no choice. He read it. In reading it he felt a mortal sickness come over him, but he persevered; he read it carefully to the end, and he was examining the signature keenly, when Miss Rolleston rejoined him.

“He loves me; does he not?” said she, wistfully.

Hazel looked half-stupidly in her face for a moment; then, with a candour which was part of his character, replied, doggedly, “Yes, the man who wrote this letter loves you.”

“Then you can pity him, and I may venture

to ask you the favour to——It will be a bitter grief and disappointment to him. Will you break it to him as gently as you can; will you say that his Helen——?”

He handed her the letter, almost thrusting it upon her, and turned away.

“Mr. Hazel! will you not grant me so small a favour?”

The man faced her, his features convulsed with passion. He covered them for a moment with his trembling hands, then, with unutterable love in the gaze he fixed upon her, he answered her pleading with one word.

“No.

CHAPTER VIII.

THIS point-blank refusal surprised Helen Rolleston; all the more that it was uttered with a certain sullenness, and even asperity, she had never seen till then in this gentle clergyman.

It made her fear she had done wrong in asking it; and she looked ashamed and distressed.

However, the explanation soon followed.

"My business," said he, "is to prolong your precious life; and making up your mind to die is not the way. You shall have no encouragement in such weakness from me. Pray let me be your physician."

"Thank you," said Helen, coldly; "I have my own physician."

"No doubt; but he shows me his incapacity, by allowing you to live on pastry and sweets; things that are utter poison to you. Disease of the lungs is curable, but not by drugs and unwholesome food."

“Mr. Hazel,” said the lady, “we will drop the subject, if you please. It has taken an uninteresting turn.”

“To you, perhaps; but not to me.”

“Excuse me, sir, if you took that real friendly interest in me and my condition I was vain enough to think you might, you would hardly have refused me the first favour I ever asked you; and,” drawing herself up proudly, “need I say the last?”

“You are unjust,” said Hazel, sadly; “unjust beyond endurance. I refuse you anything that is for your good? I who would lay down my life with unmixed joy for you?”

“Mr. Hazel!” And she drew back from him with a haughty stare. Then she trembled violently; but soon recovering herself, she said, with overpowering spirit and dignity,—“Sir, you have taught me a lesson—a bitter one. You have abused your position, and the confidence it gave me; from this moment, of course we are strangers.”

After this, Helen Rolleston and Mr. Hazel never spoke. She walked past him on the deck with cold and haughty contempt.

He quietly submitted to it; and never presumed

to say one word to her again. Only, as his determination was equal to his delicacy, Miss Rolleston found, one day, a paper on her table, containing advice as to the treatment of disordered lungs, expressed with apparent coldness, and backed by a string of medical authorities, quoted memoriter.

She sent this back directly, endorsed with a line, in pencil, that she would try hard to live, but should use her own judgment as to the means.

He replied, "Live, with whatever motive you please; only live."

To this she vouchsafed no answer; nor did this unhappy man trouble her again, until an occasion of a very different kind arose.

One fine night he sat on the deck, with his back against the mainmast, in deep melancholy and listlessness, and fell, at last, into a doze, from which he was awakened by a peculiar sound below. It was a beautiful and stilly night; all sounds were magnified; and the father of all rats seemed to be gnawing the ship down below.

Hazel's curiosity was excited, and he went softly down the ladder to see what the sound really was. But that was not so easy, for it proved to be below decks; but he saw a light glimmering through a

small scuttle abaft the mate's cabin, and the sounds were in the neighbourhood of that light.

It now flashed upon Mr. Hazel that this was the very quarter where he had heard that mysterious knocking when the ship was lying-to in the gale.

Upon this, a certain degree of vague suspicion began to mingle with his curiosity.

He stood still a moment, listening acutely; then took off his shoes very quietly, and moved with noiseless foot towards the scuttle.

The gnawing still continued.

He put his head through the scuttle, and peered into a dark, dismal place, whose very existence was new to him. It was, in fact, a vacant space between the cargo and the ship's run. This wooden cavern was very narrow, but not less than fifteen feet long. The candle was at the farther end, and between it and Hazel, a man was working, with his flank turned towards the spectator. This partly intercepted the light; but still it revealed in a fitful way the huge ribs of the ship, and her inner skin, that formed the right hand partition, so to speak, of this black cavern; and close outside those gaunt timbers was heard the wash of the sea.

There was something solemn in the close prox-

imity of that tremendous element, and the narrowness of the wooden barrier.

The bare place, and the gentle, monotonous wash of the liquid monster, on that calm night, conveyed to Mr. Hazel's mind a thought akin to David's.

"As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death."

Judge whether that thought grew weaker or stronger, when, after straining his eyes for some time to understand what was going on at that midnight hour, in that hidden place, he saw who was the workman, and what was his occupation. It was Joseph Wylie, the mate. His profile was illuminated by the candle, and looked ghastly. He had in his hands an auger of enormous size, and with this he was drilling a great hole through the ship's side, just below the water-mark; an act, the effect of which would be to let the sea bodily into the ship, and sink her, with every soul on board, to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

"I was stupefied; and my hairs stood on end, and my tongue clove to my jaws."

Thus does one of Virgil's characters describe

the effect his mind produced on his body, in a terrible situation.

Mr. Hazel had always ridiculed that trite line as a pure exaggeration; but he altered his opinion after that eventful night.

When he first saw what Wylie was doing—obstupuit; he was merely benumbed; but, as his mind realized the fiendish nature of the act, and its tremendous consequences, his hair actually bristled, and, for a few minutes at least, he could not utter a word.

In that interval of stupor, matters took another turn. The auger went in up to the haft: then Wylie caught up with his left hand a wooden plug he had got ready, jerked the auger away, caught up a hammer, and swiftly inserted the plug.

Rapid as he was, a single jet of water came squirting viciously in. But Wylie lost no time, he tapped the plug smartly with his hammer several times, and then, lifting a mallet with both hands, rained heavy blows on it that drove it in, and shook the ship's side.

Then Hazel found his voice, and he uttered an ejaculation that made the mate look round; he glared at the man, who was glaring at him,

and, staggering backward, trod on the light, and all was darkness and dead silence.

All but the wash of the sea outside, and that louder than ever.

CHAPTER IX.

BUT a short interval sufficed to restore one of the parties to his natural self-possession.

“Lord, sir,” said Wylie, “how you startled me ! You should not come upon a man at his work like that. We might have had an accident.”

“What were you doing ? ” said Hazel, in a voice that quivered in spite of him.

“Repairing the ship. Found a crack or two in her inner skin. There, let me get a light, and I’ll explain it to you, sir.”

He groped his way out, and invited Mr. Hazel into his cabin. There he struck a light, and, with great civility, tendered an explanation. The ship, he said, had laboured a good deal in the last gale, and he had discovered one or two flaws in her, which were of no immediate importance : but experience had taught him that in calm weather a

ship ought to be kept tight. "As they say ashore, a stitch in time saves nine."

"But drilling holes in her is not the way," said Hazel, sternly.

The mate laughed. "Why, sir," said he, "what other way is there? We cannot stop an irregular crack; we can frame nothing to fit it. The way is to get ready a plug, measured a trifle larger than the aperture you are going to make; then drill a round hole, and force in the plug. I know no other way than that; and I was a ship's carpenter for ten years before I was a mate."

This explanation, and the manner in which it was given, removed Mr. Hazel's apprehensions for the time being. "It was very alarming," said he; "but I suppose you know your business."

"Nobody better, sir," said Wylie. "Why, it is not one seaman in three that would trouble his head about a flaw in a ship's inner skin; but I'm a man that looks ahead. Will you have a glass of grog, sir, now you are here? I keep that under my eye too: between ourselves, if the skipper had as much in his cabin as I have here, that might be worse for us all than a crack or two in the ship's inner skin."

Mr. Hazel declined to drink grog at that time in the morning, but wished him good-night, and left him with a better opinion of him than he ever had till then.

Wylie, when he was gone, drew a tumbler of neat spirits, drank half, and carried the rest back to his work.

Yet Wylie was a very sober man in a general way. Rum was his tool; not his master.

When Hazel came to think of it all next day, he did not feel quite so easy as he had done. The inner skin! But, when Wylie withdrew his auger, the water had squirted in furiously. He felt it hard to believe that this keen jet of water could be caused by a small quantity that had found its way between the skin of the ship and her copper, or her top booting; it seemed rather to be due to the direct pressure of the liquid monster outside.

He went to the captain that afternoon, and first told him what he had seen, offering no solution. The captain, on that occasion, was in an amphibious state; neither wet nor dry; and his reply was altogether exceptional. He received the communication with pompous civility; then swore a great oath, and said he would put the mate in irons:

"Confound the lubber! he will be through the ship's bottom."

"But, stop a moment," said Mr. Hazel, "it is only fair you should also hear how he accounts for his proceeding."

The captain listened attentively to the explanation, and altered his tone. "Oh, that is a different matter," said he. "You need be under no alarm, sir; the thundering lubber knows what he is about at that work. Why, he has been a ship's carpenter all his life. Him a seaman! If anything ever happens to me, and Joe Wylie is set to navigate this ship, then you may say your prayers. He isn't fit to sail a wash-tub across a duck-pond. But I'll tell you what it is," added this worthy, with more pomposity than neatness of articulation, "here's a respectable passenger brought me a report; do my duty m'employers, and—take a look at the well."

He accordingly chalked a plumb-line, and went and sounded the well.

There were eight inches of water. Hudson told him that was no more than all ships contained from various causes; "in fact," said he, our pumps suck, and will not draw, at eight inches." Then suddenly grasping Mr. Hazel's hand, he said, in tearful

accents, "Don't you trouble your head about Joe Wylie, or any such scum. I'm skipper of the *Proserpine*, and a man that does his duty to z'employers. Mr. Hazel, sir, I'd come to my last anchor in that well this moment, if my duty to m'employers required it. I'd lie down there this minute, and never move to all eternity, and a day after, if it was my duty to n'employers."

"No doubt," said Hazel, drily. "But I think you can serve your employers better *in other parts of the ship*." He then left him, with a piece of advice; "to keep his eye upon that Wylie."

Mr. Hazel kept his own eye on Wylie so constantly, that at eleven o'clock P.M., he saw that worthy go into the captain's cabin with a quart bottle of rum.

The coast was clear; the temptation great; these men were still deceiving him with a feigned antagonism; he listened at the keyhole, not without some compunction; which, however, became less and less as fragments of the dialogue reached his ear.

For a long time the only speaker was Hudson, and his discourse ran upon his own exploits at sea. But suddenly Wylie's voice broke in with an un-

mistakeable tone of superiority. "Belay all that chat, and listen to me. It is time we settled something. I'll hear what you have got to say: and then you'll *do* what *I* say. Better keep your hands off the bottle a minute; you have had enough for the present; this is business. I know you are good for jaw; but what are you game to do for the governor's money? Anything?"

"More than you have ever seen or heard tell of, ye lubber," replied the irritated skipper. "Who has ever served his employers like Hiram Hudson?"

"Keep that song for your quarter deck," retorted the mate, contemptuously. "No; on second thoughts, just tell me how you have served your employers, you old humbug. Give me chapter and verse to choose from. Come now, the Neptune?"

"Well, the Neptune; she caught fire a hundred leagues from land. *Somebody* set a lighted candle on a gallon of turpentine. Well, I put her head before the wind, and ran for the Azores; and I stuck to her, sir, till she was as black as a coal, and we couldn't stand on deck, but kept hopping like parched peas; and fire belching out of her port-holes forward: then we took to the boats, and saved a few bales of silk by way of sample of her

cargo, and got ashore ; and she'd have come ashore too next tide and told tales ; but somebody left a keg of gunpowder in the cabin, with a long fuse, and blew a hole in her old ribs, that the water came in, and down she went, hissing like ten thousand serpents, and nobody the wiser."

"Who lighted the fuse, I wonder?" said Wylie.

"Didn't I tell ye it was *Somebody*?" said Hudson. "Hand me the stiff." He replenished his glass, and after taking a sip or two, asked Wylie if he had ever had the luck to be boarded by pirates.

"No," said Wylie. "Have you?"

"Ay ; and they rescued me from a watery grave, as the lubbers call it. Ye see, I was employed by Downes & Co., down at the Havannah, and cleared for Vera Cruz with some boxes of old worn-out printers' type."

"To print psalm-books for the darkies, no doubt," suggested Wylie.

"Insured as specie," continued Hudson, ignoring the interruption. "Well, just at day-break one morning, all of a sudden there was a rakish-looking craft on our weather-bow : lets fly a nine-pounder across our fore-foot, and was alongside before my

men could tumble up from below. I got knocked into the sea by the boom, and fell between the ships; and the pirate he got hold of me, and poured hot grog down my throat to bring me to my senses."

"That is not what you use it for in general," said Wylie. "Civil sort of pirate, though."

"Pirate be blowed. That was my consort, rigged out with a black flag, and mounted with four nine-pounders on one side, and five dummies on the other. He blustered a bit, and swore, and took our type and our cabbages, (I complained to Downes ashore about the vagabond taking the vegetables,) and ordered us to leeward under all canvas, and we never saw him again—not till he had shaved off his mustaches, and called on Downes to condole, and say the varmint had chased his ship fifty leagues out of her course; but he had got clear of him. Downes complimented me publicly. Says he, 'This skipper boarded the pirate single handed; only he jumped short, and fell between the two ships; and here he is by a miracle.' Then he takes out his handkerchief, and flops his head on my shoulder. 'His merciful preservation almost reconciles me to the loss of my gold,' says the thundering crocodile. Cleared 70,000 dollars he

did out of the Manhattan Marine, and gave the pirate and me but £200 between us both."

"The Rose?" said Wylie.

"What a hurry you are in! Pass the grog. Well, the Rose; she lay off Ushant. We canted her to wash the decks; lucky she had a careful commander; not like Kempenfelt, whose eye was in his pocket, and his fingers held the pen, so he went to the bottom, with lord knows how many men. I noticed the squalls came very sudden; so I sent most of my men ashore, and got the boats ready in case of accident. A squall did strike her, and she was on her beam-ends in a moment: we pulled ashore with two bales of silk by way of salvage, and sample of what wasn't in her hold when she settled down. We landed; and the Frenchmen were dancing about with excitement. 'Captain,' says one, 'you have much sang fraw.' 'Insured, mounseer,' says I. 'Bone,' says he.

"Then there was the Antelope, lost in charge of a pilot off the Hooghly. I knew the water as well as he did. We were on the port tack, standing towards the shoal. Weather it, as we should have done next tack, and I should have failed in

my duty to my employers. Anything but that 'Look out!' said I, 'Pilot, she forereaches in stays.' Pilot was smoking: those Sandhead pilots smoke in bed and asleep. He takes his cigar out of his mouth for one moment. 'Ready about,' says he. 'Hands 'bout ship. Helm's a-lee. Raise tacks and sheets.' Round she was coming like a top. Pilot smoking. Just as he was going to haul the mainsail, Somebody tripped against him, and shoved the hot cigar in his eye. He sung out and swore, and there was no mainsail haul. Ship in irons, tide running hard on to the shoal, and before we could clear away for anchoring, bump!—there she was hard and fast. A stiff breeze got up at sunrise, and she broke up. Next day I was sipping my grog and reading the 'Bengal Courier,' and it told the disastrous wreck of the brig Antelope, wrecked in charge of a pilot; 'but no lives lost, and the owners fully insured.' Then there was the bark Sally. Why, you saw her yourself distressed, on a lee shore."

"Yes," said Wylie. "I was in that tub, the Grampus, and we contrived to claw off the Scillies, yet you in your smart Sally got ashore. What luck!"

“Luck be blowed!” cried Hudson, angrily. “Somebody got into the chains to sound; and cut the lee halyards. Next tack the masts went over the side; and I had done my duty.”

“Lives were lost that time, eh?” said Wylie, gravely.

“What is that to you?” replied Hudson, with the sudden ire of a drunken man. “Mind your own business. Pass the bottle.”

“Yes, lives was lost: and always will be lost in sea-going ships, where the skipper does his duty. There was a sight more lost at Trafalgar, owing to *every* man doing his duty. Lives lost, ye lubber! And why not mine? Because their time was come, and mine wasn’t. For I’ll tell you one thing, Joe Wylie,—if she takes fire and runs before the wind till she is as black as a coal, and belching flame through all her portholes, and then explodes, and goes aloft in ten thousand pieces no bigger than my hat, or your knowledge of navigation, Hudson is the last man to leave her: Duty!—If she goes on her beam ends and founders, Hudson sees the last of her, and reports it to his employers: Duty!—If she goes grinding on Scilly, Hudson is the last

man to leave her bones : Duty !—Some day perhaps I shall be swamped myself along with the craft : I have escaped till now, all owing to not being insured ; but if ever my time should come, and you should get clear, promise me, Joe, to see the owners, and tell 'em Hudson did his duty."

Here a few tears quenched his noble ardour for a moment. But he soon recovered, and said, with some little heat, "You have got the bottle again. I never saw such a fellow to get hold of the bottle. Come, here's 'Duty to our employers!' And now I'll tell you how we managed with the Carysbrook and the Amelia."

This promise was followed by fresh narratives : in particular, of a vessel he had run upon the Florida reef at night, where wreckers had been retained in advance to look out for signals, and come on board and quarrel in pretence and set fire to the vessel, insured at thrice her value.

Hudson got quite excited with the memory of these exploits, and told each successive feat louder and louder.

But now it was Wylie's turn. "Well," said he, gravely, "all this was child's play."

There was a pause that marked Hudson's as-

tonishment. Then he broke out, "Child's play, ye lubber! If you had been there your gills would have been as white as your Sunday shirt."

"Come, be civil," said Wylie. "I tell you all the ways you have told me are too suspicious. Our governor is a high-flyer; he pays like a prince, and, in return, he must not be blown on, if it is ever so little. 'Wylie,' says he, 'a breath of suspicion would kill me.' 'Make it so much,' says I, 'and that breath shall never blow on you.' No, no, skipper; none of those ways will do for us: they have all been worked twice too often. It must be done in fair weather, and in a way—fill your glass, and I'll fill mine—Capital rum this. You talk of my gills turning white; before long, we shall see whose keeps their colour best, mine or yours, my Bo."

There was a silence, during which Hudson was probably asking himself what Wylie meant: for, presently, he broke out into a loud, but somewhat unsteady voice, "Why, you mad, drunken devil of a ship's carpenter, red-hot from hell, I see what you are at, now; you are going——"

"Hush!" cried Wylie, alarmed in his turn.

“Is this the sort of thing to bellow out for the watch to hear? Whisper, now.”

This was followed by the earnest mutterings of two voices. In vain did the listener send his very soul into his ear to hear. He could catch no single word. Yet he could tell, by the very tones of the speakers, that the dialogue was one of mystery and importance.

Here was a situation at once irritating and alarming; but there was no help for it. The best thing, now, seemed to be to withdraw unobserved, and wait for another opportunity. He did so: and he had not long retired, when the mate came out staggering, and flushed with liquor, and that was a thing that had never occurred before. He left the cabin door open, and went into his own room.

Soon after, sounds issued from the cabin, peculiar sounds, something between grunting and snoring.

Mr. Hazel came and entered the cabin. There he found the captain of the *Proserpine* in a position very unfavourable to longevity. His legs were crooked over the seat of his chair, and his head was on the ground. His handkerchief was tight

round his neck, and the man himself dead drunk, and purple in the face.

Mr. Hazel instantly undid his stock on; which the gallant seaman muttered inarticulately. He then took his feet off the chair, and laid them on the ground, and put the empty bottle under the animal's neck. He gave the prostrate figure a heavy kick that almost turned it over, and the words, "Duty to m'employers," gurgled out of its mouth directly.

It really seemed as if these sounds were independent of the mind, and resided at the tip of Hudson's tongue; so that a thorough good kick could, at any time, shake them out of his inanimate body.

Thus do things ludicrous, and things terrible, mingle in the real world; only, to those who are in the arena, the ludicrous passes unnoticed, being overshadowed by its terrible neighbour.

And so it was with Hazel. He saw nothing absurd in all this; and in that prostrate, insensible hog, commanding the ship, forsooth, and carrying all their lives in his hands: he saw the mysterious and alarming only; saw them so, and felt them, that he lay awake all night thinking what he should

do, and early next day he went into the mate's cabin, and said to him, "Mr. Wylie, in any other ship I should speak to the captain, and not to the mate; but here that would be no use, for you are the master, and he is your servant."

"Don't tell him so, sir, for he doesn't think small beer of himself."

"I shall waste no more words on him. It is to you I speak, and you know I speak the truth. Here is a ship, in which, for certain reasons known to yourself, the captain is under the mate."

"Well, sir," said Wylie, good-humouredly, "it is of no use trying to deceive a gentleman like you. Our skipper is an excellent seaman, but he has got a fault." Then Wylie imitated, with his hand, the action of a person filling his glass.

"And you are here to keep him sober? eh?"

Wylie nodded.

"Then why do you ply him with liquor?"

"I don't, sir."

"You do. I have seen you do it a dozen times: and last night you took rum into his room, and made him so drunk, he would have died where he lay if I had not loosed his handkerchief."

"I am sorry to hear that, sir; but he was sober when I left him. The fool must have got to the bottle the moment I was gone."

"But that bottle you put in his way; I saw you: and what was your object? to deaden his conscience with liquor, his and your own, while you made him your fiendish proposal. Man, man, do you believe in God, and in a judgment to come for the deeds done in the body, that you can plan in cold blood to destroy a vessel with nineteen souls on board, besides the live stock, the innocent animals that God pitied and spared, when he raised his hand in wrath over Nineveh of old?"

While the clergyman was speaking, with flashing eyes and commanding voice, the seaman turned ashy pale; and drew his shoulders together like a cat preparing to defend her life.

"I plan to destroy a vessel, sir! You never heard me say such a word; and don't you hint such a thing in the ship, or you will get yourself into trouble."

"That depends on you."

"How so, sir?"

"I have long suspected you."

"You need not tell me that, sir."

“ But I have not communicated my suspicions. And now that they are certainties, I come first to you. In one word, will you forego your intention, since it is found out ? ”

“ How can I forego what never was in my head ? ” said Wylie. “ Cast away the ship ! Why there’s no land within three thousand miles. Founder a vessel in the Pacific ! Do you think my life is not as sweet to me as yours is to you ? ”

Wylie eyed him keenly to see the effect of these words, and by a puzzled expression that came over his face, saw at once he had assumed a more exact knowledge than he really possessed.

Hazel replied that he had said nothing about foundering the ship ; but there were many ways of destroying one. “ For instance,” said he, “ I know how the Neptune was destroyed—and so do you ; how the Rose and the Antelope were cast away—and so do you.”

At this enumeration, Wylie lost his colour and self-possession for a moment ; he saw Hazel had been listening. Hazel followed up his blow. “ Promise me now, by all you hold sacred, to forego this villany ; and I hold my tongue. Attempt

to defy me, or to throw dust in my eyes, and I go instantly among the crew, and denounce both you and Hudson to them."

"Good Heavens!" cried Wylie, in unfeigned terror. "Why, the men would mutiny on the spot."

"I can't help that," said Hazel, firmly; and took a step towards the door.

"Stop a bit," said the mate, and, springing before the clergyman, he set his back against the door. "Don't be in such a nation hurry: for, if you do, it will be bad for me, but worse for you." The above was said so gravely, and with such evident sincerity, that Mr. Hazel was struck, and showed it. Wylie followed up that trifling advantage. "Sit down a minute, sir, if you please, and listen to me. You never saw a mutiny on board ship, I'll be bound. It is a worse thing than any gale that ever blew: begins fair enough, sometimes; but how does it end? In breaking into the spirit room, and drinking to madness, plundering the ship, ravishing the women, and cutting a throat or so for certain. You don't seem so fond of the picture, as you was of the idea. And then they might turn a deaf ear to you, after all. Ship is well

found in all stores; provisions served out freely; men in good humour; and I have got their ear. And now I'll tell you why it won't suit your little game to blacken me to the crew, upon the bare chance of a mutiny." He paused for a moment, then resumed in a lower tone, "You see, sir, when a man is very ready to suspect me, I always suspect him. Now you was uncommon ready to suspect me. You didn't wait till you came on board; you began the game ashore. Oh! that makes you open one eye, does it? You thought I didn't know you again. Knew you, my man, the moment you came aboard. I never forget a face; and disguises don't pass on me."

It was now Hazel's turn to look anxious and discomposed.

"Well, then, the moment I saw you suspected me I was down upon you. You come aboard under false colours. We didn't want a chap like you in the ship; but you would come. 'What is the bloke after?' says I, and watches. You was so intent suspecting me of this, that and t'other, that you unguarded yourself: and that is common too. 'I'm blowed if it isn't the lady he is after,' says I. With all my heart: only she might do better, and I don't

see how she could do worse, unless she went to old Nick for a mate. Now, I'll tell you what it is, my Ticket o' Leave. I've been in trouble myself, and don't want to be hard on a poor devil, just because he sails under an alias, and lies as near the wind as he can, to weather on the beaks and the bobbies. But one good turn deserves another: keep your dirty suspicions to yourself; for if you dare to open your lips to the men, in five minutes, or less than that, you shall be in irons, and confined to your cabin; and we'll put you ashore at the first port that flies a British flag, and hand you over to the authorities, till one of Her Majesty's cruisers sends in a boat for you."

At this threat Mr. Hazel hung his head in confusion and dismay.

"Come, get out of my cabin, Parson Alias," shouted the mate; "and belay your foul tongue in this ship, and don't make an enemy of Joe Wylie, a man that can eat you up and spit you out again, and never brag. Sheer off, I say, and be d——d to you."

Mr. Hazel, with a pale face and sick heart, looked aghast at this dangerous man, who could be fox, or tiger, as the occasion demanded.

Surprised, alarmed, outwitted, and out-menaced, he retired with disordered countenance and uneven steps, and hid himself in his own cabin.

The more he weighed the whole situation, the more clearly did he see that he was utterly powerless in the hands of Wylie. A skipper is an emperor; and Hudson had the power to iron him, and set him on shore at the nearest port. The right to do it was another matter; but even on that head, Wylie could furnish a plausible excuse for the act. Retribution, if it came at all, would not be severe, and would be three or four years coming: and who fears it much, when it is so dilatory, and so weak, and doubtful into the bargain?

He succumbed in silence for two days; and then, in spite of Wylie's threat, he made one timid attempt to approach the subject with Welch and Cooper, but a sailor came up instantly, and sent them forward to reef topsails. And whenever he tried to enter into conversation with the pair, some sailor or other was sure to come up and listen.

Then he saw that he was spotted; or, as we say now-a-days, picketed.

He was at his wits' end.

He tried his last throw. He wrote a few lines

to Miss Rolleston, requesting an interview. Aware of the difficulties he had to encounter here, he stilled his heart by main force, and wrote in terms carefully measured. He begged her to believe he had no design to intrude upon her, without absolute necessity, and for her own good. Respect for her own wishes forbade this, and also his self-respect.

“But,” said he, “I have made a terrible discovery. The mate and the captain certainly intend to cast away this ship. No doubt they will try and not sacrifice their own lives and ours; but risk them they must, in the very nature of things. Before troubling you, I have tried all I could, in the way of persuasion and menace; but am defeated. So now it rests with you. You, alone, can save us all. I will tell you how, if you will restrain your repugnance, and accord me a short interview. Need I say that no other subject shall be introduced by me. In England, should we ever reach it, I may perhaps try to take measures to regain your good opinion; but here, I am aware, that is impossible; and I shall make no attempt in that direction, upon my honour.”

To this there came a prompt and feminine reply.

“The ship is Mr. Arthur Wardlaw’s. The captain and the mate are able men appointed by him; I shall hand them your letter: and I request, sir, this may be your last communication of any kind with

“HELEN ANNE ROLLESTON.”

That night Wylie came to his cabin and laid on the table before him his letter to Miss Rolleston.

“Now, lookye here, mate,” said the man, “what’s to be the game between you and me? Has love for this gal druv you off your head? Take warning, and a last one, mind ye! If you stir your eye to cross my business, I blow the gaff. I’ll introduce you to the lady under your true colours, and introduce your reverend ancles to the irons atween decks! What’s got into ye?” hissed the mate, advancing his face close to Hazel’s. And the rogue looked down the honest man’s eye that quailed before him. When Hazel looked up, he was gone. The poor fellow gazed on the letter, which Helen had handed to the captain; he saw that resistance was useless; his eyes wandered about in despair; His arms hung listlessly by his side. He was beaten.

His mental distress brought on an attack of that terrible malady, jaundice.

He crept about, yellow as a guinea ; a very scare-crow.

He took no exercise ; he ate little food. He lay, listless and dejected, about the deck.

The ship now encountered an adverse gale, and, for three whole days, was under close-reefed topsails ; she was always a wet ship under stress of weather ; and she took in a good deal of water on this occasion. On the fourth day it fell calm, and Captain Hudson, having examined the well, and found three feet of water, ordered the men to the pumps.

After working through one watch, the well was sounded again, and the water was so much reduced that the gangs were taken off ; and the ship being now becalmed, and the weather lovely, the men were allowed to dance upon deck to the boatswain's fiddle.

While this pastime went on, the sun, large and red, reached the horizon, and diffused a roseate light over the entire ocean.

Not one of the current descriptions of heaven approach the actual grandeur and beauty of the

blue sky flecked with ruby and gold, and its liquid mirror that lay below, calm, dimpled, and glorified by that translucent, rosy tint.

While the eyes were yet charmed with this enchanting bridal of the sea and sky, and the ear amused with the merry fiddle and the nimble feet, that tapped the sounding deck so deftly at every note, Cooper, who had been sounding the well, ran forward all of a sudden, and flung a thunderbolt in the midst.

“A LEAK!”

CHAPTER X.

THE fiddle ended in mid-tune, and the men crowded aft with anxious faces.

The captain sounded the well, and found three feet and a half water in it. He ordered all hands to the pumps.

They turned to with a good heart, and pumped, watch and watch, till day-break.

Their exertions counteracted the leak, but did no more ; the water in the well was neither more nor less perceptibly. This was a relief to their minds, so far ; but the situation was a very serious one. Suppose foul weather should come, and the vessel ship water from above as well !

Now, all those who were not on the pumps, set to work to find out the leak and stop it if possible. With candles in their hands, they crept about the ribs of the ship, narrowly inspecting every corner, and applying their ears to every suspected place,

if haply they might hear the water coming in. The place where Hazel had found Wylie at work was examined, along with the rest; but neither there nor anywhere else could the leak be discovered. Yet the water was still coming in, and required unremitting labour to keep it under. It was then suggested by Wylie, and the opinion gradually gained ground, that some of the seams had opened in the late gale, and were letting in the water by small but numerous apertures.

Faces began to look cloudy; and Hazel, throwing off his lethargy, took his spell at the main pump with the rest.

When his gang was relieved he went away, bathed in perspiration, and, leaning over the well, sounded it.

While thus employed, the mate came behind him, with his cat-like step, and said, "See what has come on us with your forebodings! It is the unluckiest thing in the world to talk about losing a ship when she is at sea."

"You are a more dangerous man on board a ship than I am," was Hazel's prompt reply.

The well gave an increase of three inches.

Mr. Hazel now showed excellent qualities. He

worked like a horse ; and, finding the mate skulking, he reproached him before the men, and, stripping himself naked to the waist, invited him to do a man's duty. The mate, thus challenged, complied with a scowl.

They laboured for their lives, and the quantity of water they discharged from the ship was astonishing ; not less than a hundred and ten tons every hour.

They gained upon the leak—only two inches ; but, in the struggle for life, this was an immense victory. It was the turn of the tide.

A light breeze sprung up from the south-west, and the captain ordered the men from the buckets to make all sail on the ship, the pumps still going.

When this was done, he altered the ship's course, and put her right before the wind, steering for the island of Juan Fernandez, which, though distant, was the nearest known land.

Probably it was the best thing he could do, in that awful waste of water. But its effect on the seamen was bad. It was like giving in. They got a little disheartened and flurried ; and the cold, passionless water seized the advantage. It is pos-

sible, too, that the motion of the ship through the sea, aided the leak.

The Proserpine glided through the water all night, like some terror-stricken creature, and the incessant pumps seemed to be her poor heart beating loudly with breathless fear.

At day-break she had gone a hundred and twenty miles. But this was balanced by a new and alarming feature. The water from the pumps no longer came up pure, but mixed with what appeared to be blood.

This got redder and redder, and struck terror into the more superstitious of the crew.

Even Cooper, whose heart was stout, leaned over the bulwarks, and eyed the red stream, gushing into the sea from the lee scuppers, and said aloud, "Ay, bleed to death, ye bitch! We shan't be long behind ye."

Hazel inquired, and found the ship had a quantity of dye-wood amongst her cargo; he told the men this, and tried to keep up their hearts by his words and his example.

He succeeded with some : but others shook their heads. And by-and-by, even while he was working double tides, for them as well as for himself,

ominous murmurs met his ear. "Parson aboard!" "Man aboard, with t'other world in his face!" And there were sinister glances to match.

He told this, with some alarm, to Welch and Cooper. They promised to stand by him; and Welch told him it was all the mate's doing; he had gone amongst the men, and poisoned them.

The wounded vessel, with her ever-beating heart, had run three hundred miles on the new tack. She had almost ceased to bleed; but what was as bad, or worse, small fragments of her cargo and stores came up with the water, and their miscellaneous character showed how deeply the sea had now penetrated.

This, and their great fatigue, began to demoralise the sailors. The pumps and buckets were still plied, but it was no longer with the uniform manner of brave and hopeful men. Some stuck doggedly to their work, but others got flurried, and ran from one thing to another. Now and then a man would stop, and burst out crying; then to work again in a desperate way. One or two lost heart altogether, and had to be driven. Finally, one or two succumbed under the unremitting labour. Despair

crept over others: their features began to change, so much so, that several countenances were hardly recognisable, and each, looking in the other's troubled face, saw his own fate pictured there.

Six feet water in the hold !

The captain, who had been sober beyond his time, now got dead drunk.

The mate took the command. On hearing this, Welch and Cooper left the pumps. Wylie ordered them back. They refused, and coolly lighted their pipes. A violent altercation took place, which was brought to a close by Welch.

"It is no use pumping the ship," said he. "She is doomed. D'ye think we are blind, my mate and me? You got the long-boat ready for yourself before ever the leak was sprung. Now get the cutter ready for my mate and me."

At these simple words Wylie lost colour, and walked aft without a word.

Next day there were seven feet water in the hold, and quantities of bread coming up through the pumps.

Wylie ordered the men from the pumps to the boats. The long-boat was provisioned and lowered.

While she was towing astern, the cutter was prepared, and the ship left to fill.

All this time Miss Rolleston had been kept in the dark, not as to the danger, but as to its extent. Great was her surprise when Mr. Hazel entered her cabin, and cast an ineffable look of pity on her.

She looked up surprised, and then angry. "How dare you?" she began.

He waved his hand in a sorrowful but commanding way. "Oh, this is no time for prejudice or temper. The ship is sinking: we are going into the boats. Pray make your preparations. Here is a list I have written of the things you ought to take: we may be weeks at sea, in an open boat."

Then, seeing her dumb-founded, he caught up her carpet-bag, and threw her workbox into it for a beginning. He then laid hands upon some of her preserved meats, and marmalade, and carried them off to his own cabin.

His mind then flew back to his reading, and passed in rapid review, all the wants that men had endured in open boats.

He got hold of Welch, and told him to be

sure and see there was plenty of spare canvas on board, and sailing needles, scissors, &c.: also three bags of biscuit, and, above all, a cask of water.

He himself ran all about the ship, including the mate's cabin, in search of certain tools he thought would be wanted.

Then to his own cabin, to fill his carpet-bag.

There was little time to spare ; the ship was low in the water, and the men abandoning her. He flung the things into his bag, fastened and locked it, strapped up his blankets for her use, flung on his pea-jacket, and ran across to the starboard side. There he found the captain lowering Miss Rolleston, with due care, into the cutter, and the young lady crying ; not at being shipwrecked, but at being deserted by her maid. Jane Holt, at this trying moment, had deserted her mistress for her husband. This was natural ; but, as is the rule with persons of that class, she had done it in the silliest and cruelest way. Had she given half-an-hour's notice of her intention, Donovan might have been on board the cutter with her and her mistress. But no ; being a liar and a fool, she must hide her husband to the last moment, and then desert her

mistress. The captain, then, was comforting Miss Rolleston, and telling her she should have her maid with her eventually, when Hazel came; he handed down his own bag, and threw the blankets into the stern-sheets; then went down himself, and sat on the midship thwart.

"Shove off," said the captain; and they fell astern.

But Cooper, with a boat-hook, hooked on to the long-boat; and the dying ship towed them both.

Five minutes more elapsed, and the captain did not come down, so Wylie hailed him.

There was no answer. Hudson had gone into the mate's cabin. Wylie waited a minute, then hailed again. "Hy! on deck there!"

"Hullo!" cried the captain, at last.

"Why didn't you come in the cutter?"

The captain crossed his arms, and leaned over the stern.

"Don't you know that Hiram Hudson is always the last to leave a sinking ship?"

"Well, you *are* the last," said Wylie. "So now come on board the long-boat at once. I dare not tow in her wake much longer, to be sucked in when she goes down."

“Come on board your craft, and desert my own?” said Hudson, disdainfully. “Know my duty to m’employers better.”

These words alarmed the mate. “Curse it all!” he cried; “the fool has been and got some more rum. Fifty guineas to the man that will shin up the tow-rope, and throw that madman into the sea; then we can pick him up. He swims like a cork.”

A sailor instantly darted forward to the rope. But, unfortunately, Hudson heard this proposal, and it enraged him. He got to his cutlass. The sailor drew the boat under the ship’s stern, but the drunken skipper flourished his cutlass furiously over his head. “Board me? ye pirates! the first that lays a finger on my bulwarks, off goes his hand at the wrist.” Suiting the action to the word, he hacked at the tow-rope so vigorously that it gave way, and the boats fell astern.

Helen Rolleston uttered a shriek of dismay and pity. “Oh, save him!” she cried.

“Make sail!” cried Cooper; and, in a few seconds, they got all her canvas set upon the cutter.

It seemed a hopeless chase for these shells to

sail after that dying monster with her cloud of canvas all drawing, alow and aloft.

But it did not prove so. The gentle breeze was an advantage to light craft, and the dying Proserpine was full of water, and could only crawl.

After a few moments of great anxiety, the boats crept up, the cutter on her port, and the long-boat on her starboard quarter.

Wylie ran forward, and, hailing Hudson, implored him, in the friendliest tones, to give himself a chance. Then tried him by his vanity, "Come, and command the boats, old fellow. How can we navigate them on the Pacific, without *you*?"

Hudson was now leaning over the taffrail utterly drunk. He made no reply to the mate, but merely waved his cutlass feebly in one hand, and his bottle in the other, and gurgled out, "Duty to m'employers."

Then Cooper, without a word, double reefed the cutter's mainsail, and ordered Welch to keep as close to the ship's quarter as he dare. Wylie instinctively did the same, and the three craft crawled on, in solemn and deadly silence, for nearly twenty minutes.

The wounded ship seemed to receive a death-blow. She stopped dead, and shook.

The next moment she pitched gently forward, and her bows went under the water, while her after-part rose into the air, and revealed to those in the cutter two splintered holes in her run, just below the water-line.

Welch started up and gripped Cooper by the shoulder; he pointed to the holes, from which the water was pouring in jets.

The next moment her stern settled down; the sea yawned horribly; the great waves of her own making rushed over her upper deck; and the lofty masts and sails, remaining erect, went down with sad majesty into the deep: and nothing remained but the bubbling and foaming of the voracious water, that had swallowed up the good ship and her cargo, and her drunken master.

All stood up in the boats, ready to save him. But the suction of the timber leviathan drew him down. He was seen no more in this world.

A loud sigh broke from every living bosom that witnessed that terrible catastrophe.

It was beyond words: and none were uttered, except by Cooper, who spoke so seldom; yet now

three words of terrible import burst from him, and, uttered in his loud deep voice, rang like the sunk ship's knell over the still bubbling water,—

“SCUTTLED—BY GOD!”

CHAPTER XI.

“HOLD your tongue,” said Welch, with an oath.

Mr. Hazel looked at Miss Rolleston, and she at him. It was a momentary glance, and her eyes sank directly, and filled with patient tears. For the first few minutes after the Proserpine went down, the survivors sat benumbed, as if awaiting their turn to be engulfed.

They seemed so little, and the Proserpine so big; yet she was swallowed before their eyes, like a crumb. They lost, for a few moments, all idea of escaping.

But, true it is, that, “while there’s life there’s hope:” and, as soon as their hearts began to beat again, their eyes roved round the horizon, and their elastic minds recoiled against despair.

This was rendered easier by the wonderful beauty of the weather. There were men there, who had got down from a sinking ship, into boats heaving

and tossing against her side in a gale of wind, and yet been saved: and here all was calm and delightful. To be sure, in those other shipwrecks, land had been near, and their greatest peril was over when once the boats got clear of the distressed ship without capsizing. Here was no immediate peril; but certain death menaced them, at an uncertain distance.

Their situation was briefly this. Should it come on to blow a gale, these open boats, small and loaded, could not hope to live. Therefore they had two chances for life, and no more: they must either make land,—or be picked up at sea,—before the weather changed.‡

But how? The nearest known land was the group of islands called Juan Fernandez, and they lay somewhere to leeward; but distant more than one thousand miles: and should they prefer the other chance, then they must beat three hundred miles and more, to windward; for Hudson, under-rating the leak, as is supposed, had run the *Proserpine* fully that distance out of the track of trade.

Now the ocean is a highway—in law: but, in fact, it contains a few highways, and millions of by-ways; and once a cockle-shell gets into those

by-ways, small indeed is its chance of being seen and picked up by any sea-going vessel.

Wylie, who was leading, lowered his sail, and hesitated between the two courses we have indicated. However, on the cutter coming up with him, he ordered Cooper to keep her head north-east, and so run all night. He then made all the sail he could in the same direction, and soon outsailed the cutter. When the sun went down, he was about a mile ahead of her.

Just before sunset, Mr. Hazel made a discovery that annoyed him very much. He found that Welch had put only one bag of biscuit, a ham, a keg of spirit, and a small barrel of water, on board the cutter.

He remonstrated with him sharply. Welch replied that it was all right; the cutter, being small, he had put the rest of her provisions on board the long-boat.

"On board the long-boat!" said Hazel, with a look of wonder. "You have actually made our lives depend upon that scoundrel Wylie again. You deserve to be flung into the sea. You have no forethought yourself: yet you will not be guided by those that have it."

Welch hung his head a little at these reproaches. However, he replied, rather sullenly, that it was only for one night; they could signal [the long-boat in the morning, and get the other bags, and the cask, out of her. But Mr. Hazel was not to be appeased. "The morning! Why, she sails three feet to our two. How do you know he won't run away from us? I never expect to get within ten miles of him again. We know him; and he knows we know him."

Cooper got up, and patted Mr. Hazel on the shoulder, soothingly. "Boat-hook aft," said he to Welch.

He then, by an ingenious use of the boat-hook, and some of the spare canvas, contrived to set out a studding-sail on the other side of the mast:

Hazel thanked him warmly. "But, oh, Cooper! Cooper!" said he, "I'd give all I have in the world if that bread and water were on board the cutter instead of the long-boat."

The cutter had now two wings, instead of one; the water bubbling loud under her bows marked her increased speed; and all fear of being greatly outsailed by her consort began to subside.

A slight sea-fret came on, and obscured the sea

in part ; but they had a good lantern and compass, and steered the course exactly, all night, according to Wylie's orders, changing the helmsman every four hours.

Mr. Hazel, without a word, put a rug round Miss Rolleston's shoulders, and another round her feet.

"Oh, not both, sir, please," said she.

"Am I to be disobeyed by everybody?" said he.

Then she submitted in silence, and in a certain obsequious way that was quite new, and well calculated to disarm anger.

Sooner or later, all slept, except the helmsman.

At day-break, Mr. Hazel was wakened by a loud hail from a man in the bows.

All the sleepers started up.

"Long-boat not in sight!"

It was too true. The ocean was blank: not a sail, large or small, in sight.

Many voices spoke at once.

"He has carried on till he has capsized her."

"He has given us the slip."

Unwilling to believe so great a calamity, every eye peered and stared all over the sea. In vain.

Not a streak that could be a boat's hull, not a speck that could be a sail.

The little cutter was alone upon the ocean. Alone, with scarcely two days' provisions, one thousand miles from land, and four hundred miles to leeward of the nearest sea-road.

Hazel, seeing his worst forebodings realised, sat down in moody, bitter, and boding silence.

Of the other men some raged, and cursed. Some wept aloud.

The lady, more patient, put her hands together, and prayed to Him, who made the sea, and all that therein is. Yet her case was the cruelest. For she was by nature more timid than the men, yet she must share their desperate peril. And then to be alone with all these men, and one of them had told her he loved her! Shame tortured this delicate creature, as well as fear. Happy for her, that of late, and only of late, she had learned to pray in earnest. "*Qui precari novit, premi potest, non potest opprimi.*"

It was now a race between starvation and drowning, and either way death stared them in the face.

CHAPTER XII.

THE long-boat was, at this moment, a hundred miles to windward of the cutter.

The fact is, that Wylie, the evening before, had been secretly perplexed as to the best course. He had decided to run for the island; but he was not easy under his own decision; and, at night, he got more and more discontented with it. Finally, at nine o'clock P.M., he suddenly gave the order to luff, and tack; and by day-break he was very near the place where the Proserpine went down: whereas the cutter, having run before the wind all night, was, at least, a hundred miles to leeward of him.

Not to deceive the reader, or let him, for a moment, think we do business in monsters, we will weigh this act of Wylie's justly.

It was a piece of iron egotism. He preferred, for himself the chance of being picked up by a vessel. He thought it was about a hair's-breadth

better than running for an island, as to whose bearing he was not very clear, after all.

But he was not *sure* he was taking the best or safest course. The cutter might be saved, after all, and the long-boat lost.

Meantime he was not sorry of an excuse to shake off the cutter. She contained one man at least who knew he had scuttled the Proserpine; and therefore it was all important to him to get to London before her, and receive the two thousand pounds, which was to be his reward for that abominable act.

But the way to get to London before Mr. Hazel, or else to the bottom of the Pacific before him, was to get back into the sea-road, at all hazards.

He was not aware that the cutter's water and biscuit were on board his boat; nor did he discover this till noon next day. And on making this fearful discovery, he showed himself human: he cried out with an oath, "What have I done? I have damned myself to all eternity?"

He then ordered the boat to be put before the wind again; but the men scowled, and not one stirred a finger; and he saw the futility of this, and did not persist: but groaned aloud: and then sat, staring wildly: finally, like a true sailor, he got to

the rum, and stupified his agitated conscience for a time.

While he lay drunk, at the bottom of the boat, his sailors carried out his first instructions, beating southward right in the wind's eye.

Five days they beat to windward, and never saw a sail. Then it fell dead calm; and so remained for three days more.

The men began to suffer greatly from cramps, owing to their number and confined position. During the calm, they rowed all day, and with this, and a light westerly breeze that sprung up, they got into the sea-road again: but having now sailed three hundred and fifty miles to the southward, they found a great change in the temperature: the nights were so cold they were fain to huddle together, to keep a little warmth in their bodies.

On the fifteenth day of their voyage it began to rain and blow, and then they were never a whole minute out of peril. Hand for ever on the sheet, eye on the waves, to ease her at the right moment: and, with all this care, the spray eternally flying half way over her mast, and often a body of water making a clean breach over her, and the men baling

night and day with their very hats, or she could not have lived an hour.

At last, when they were almost dead with wet, cold, fatigue, and danger, a ship came in sight, and crept slowly up, about two miles to windward of the distressed boat. With the heave of the waters they could see little more than her sails; but they ran up a bright bandana handkerchief to their mast-head; and the ship made them out. She hoisted Dutch colours, and—continued her course.

Then the poor abandoned creatures wept, and raved, and cursed, in their phrenzy, glaring after that cruel, shameless man, who could do such an act, yet hoist a colour, and show of what nation he was the native—and the disgrace.

But one of them said not a word. This was Wylie. He sat shivering, and remembered how he had abandoned the cutter, and all on board. Loud sighs broke from his labouring breast; but not a word. Yet one word was ever present to his mind; and seemed written in fire on the night of clouds, and howled in his ears by the wind—Retribution!

And now came a dirty night—to men in ships; a fearful night to men in boats. The sky black, the sea on fire with crested billows, that broke over

them every minute; their light was washed out; their provisions drenched and spoiled: bale as they would, the boat was always filling. Up to their knees in water; cold as ice, blinded with spray, deafened with roaring billows, they tossed and tumbled in a fiery foaming hell of waters, and still, though despairing, clung to their lives, and baled with their hats unceasingly.

Day broke, and the first sight it revealed to them was a brig to windward staggering along, and pitching under close-reefed topsails.

They started up, and waved their hats, and cried aloud. But the wind carried their voices to leeward, and the brig staggered on.

They ran up their little signal of distress; but still the vessel staggered on.

Then the miserable men shook hands all round, and gave themselves up for lost.

But, at this moment, the brig hoisted a vivid flag all stripes and stars, and altered her course a point or two.

She crossed the boat's track a mile ahead, and her people looked over the bulwarks, and waved their hats to encourage those tossed and desperate men.

Having thus given them the weather gage, she hove-to for them.

They ran down to her, and crept under her lee; down came ropes to them, held by friendly hands, and friendly faces shone down at them: eager grasps seized each as he went up the ship's side, and so, in a very short time, they sent the woman up, and the rest being all sailors, and clever as cats, they were safe on board the whaling brig Maria, Captain Slocum, of Nantucket, U. S.

Their log, compass, and instruments, were also saved.

The boat was cast adrift, and was soon after seen bottom upwards on the crest of a wave.

The good Samaritan in command of the Maria supplied them with dry clothes out of the ship's stores, good food, and medical attendance, which was much needed, their legs and feet being in a deplorable condition, and their own surgeon crippled.

A south-easterly gale induced the American skipper to give Cape Horn a wide berth, and the Maria soon found herself three degrees south of that perilous coast. There she encountered field-ice. In this labyrinth they dodged and worried

for eighteen days, until a sudden chop in the wind gave the captain a chance of which he promptly availed himself; and in forty hours sighted Terra del Fuego.

During this time, the rescued crew having recovered from the effects of their hardships, fell in to the work of the ship, and took their turns with the Yankee seamen. The brig was short-handed; but trimmed and handled by a full crew,—and the *Proserpine's* men, who were first-class seamen, worked with a will because work was no longer a duty,—she exhibited a speed the captain had almost forgotten was in the craft. Now speed at sea means economy, for every day added to a voyage is so much off the profits. Slocum was part owner of the boat, and shrewdly alive to the value of the seamen. When about three hundred miles south of Buenos Ayres, Wylie proposed that they should be landed there, from whence they might be transhipped to a vessel bound for home. This was objected to by Slocum, on the ground that by such a deviation from his course he must lose three days, and the port dues at Buenos Ayres were heavy.

Wylie undertook that the house of Wardlaw &

Son should indemnify the brig for all expenses and losses incurred.

Still the American hesitated ; at last he honestly told Wylie he wished to keep the men ; he liked them, they liked him. He had sounded them, and they had no objection to join his ship, and sign articles for a three years' whaling voyage, provided they did not thereby forfeit the wages to which they would be entitled on reaching Liverpool. Wylie went forward and asked the men if they would take service with the Yankee captain. All but three expressed their desire to do so ; these three had families in England, and refused. The mate gave the others a release, and an order on Wardlaw & Co. for their full wages for the voyage ; then they signed articles with Captain Slocum, and entered the American Mercantile Navy.

Two days after this they sighted the high lands at the mouth of the Rio de la Plata at 10 P.M., and lay-to for a pilot. After three hours' delay they were boarded by a pilot-boat, and then began to creep into the port. The night was very dark, and a thin white fog lay on the water.

Wylie was sitting on the taffrail, and conversing

with Slocum, when the look-out forward sung out,
“ Sail ho ! ”

Another voice almost simultaneously yelled out of the fog, “ Port your helm ! ”

Suddenly, out of the mist, and close aboard the Maria, appeared the hull and canvas of a very large ship. The brig was crossing her course, and the ship's great bowsprit barely missed the brig's main-sail. It stood for a moment over Wylie's head. He looked up, and there was the figure-head of the ship looming almost within his reach. It was a colossal green woman ; one arm extended grasped a golden harp, the other was pressed to her head in the attitude of holding back her wild and flowing hair. The face seemed to glare down upon the two men : in another moment the monster, gliding on, just missing the brig, was lost in the fog.

“ That was a narrow squeak,” said Slocum.

Wylie made no answer, but looked into the darkness after the vessel.

He had recognised her figure-head.

It was the Shannon.

CHAPTER XIII.

BEFORE the *Maria* sailed again with the men who formed a part of Wylie's crew, he made them sign a declaration before the English Consul at Buenos Ayres. This document set forth the manner in which the *Proserpine* foundered; it was artfully made up of facts, enough to deceive a careless listener; but when Wylie read it over to them, he slurred over certain parts, which he took care, also, to express in language above the comprehension of such men. Of course, they assented eagerly to what they did not understand, and signed the statement conscientiously.

So Wylie and his three men were shipped on board the *Boadicea*, bound for Liverpool, in Old England, while the others sailed with Captain Slocum, for Nantucket, in New England.

The *Boadicea* was a clipper laden with hides and a miscellaneous cargo. For seventeen days she

flew before a southerly gale, being on her best sailing point, and after one of the shortest passages she had ever made, she lay-to outside the bar, off the Mersey. It wanted but one hour to daylight, the tide was flowing; the pilot sprang aboard.

“What do you draw?” he asked of the master.

“Fifteen feet, barely,” was the reply.

“That will do,” and the vessel’s head was laid for the river.

They passed a large barque, with her top-sails backed.

“Ay,” remarked the pilot, “she has waited since the half-ebb; there ain’t more than four hours in the twenty-four that such craft as that can get in.”

“What is she? An American liner?” asked Wylie, peering through the gloom.

“No,” said the pilot; “she’s an Australian ship. The Shannon, from Sydney.”

The mate started, looked at the man, then at the vessel. Twice the Shannon had thus met him, as if to satisfy him that his object had been attained, and each time she seemed to him not an inanimate thing, but a silent accomplice. A chill of fear

struck through the man's frame as he looked at her. Yes, there she lay, and in her hold were safely stowed £160,000 in gold, marked lead and copper.

Wylie had no luggage nor effects to detain him on board; he landed, and having bestowed his three companions in a sailors' boarding-house, he was hastening to the shipping agents of Wardlaw & Son to announce his arrival and the fate of the *Proserpine*. He had reached their offices in Water Street before he recollected that it was barely half-past five o'clock, and though broad daylight on that July morning, merchants' offices are not open at that hour. The sight of the *Shannon* had so bewildered him that he had not noticed that the shops were all shut, the streets deserted. Then a thought occurred to him—why not be the bearer of his own news? He did not require to turn the idea twice over, but resolved for many reasons to adopt it. As he hurried to the railway-station, he tried to recollect the hour at which the early train started; but his confused and excited mind refused to perform the function of memory. The *Shannon* dazed him.

At the railway-station he found that a train had started at 4 A.M., and there was nothing until 7.30.

This check sobered him a little, and he went back to the docks : he walked out to the further end of that noble line of berths, and sat down on the verge with his legs dangling over the water. He waited an hour : it was six o'clock by the great dial at St. George's Dock. His eyes were fixed on the Shannon, which was moving slowly up the river ; she came abreast to where he sat. The few sails requisite to give her steerage, fell. Her anchor-chain rattled, and she swung round with the tide. The clock struck the half-hour : a boat left the side of the vessel, and made straight for the steps near where he was seated. A tall, noble looking man sat in the stern sheets, beside the coxswain ; he was put ashore, and, after exchanging a few words with the boat's crew, he mounted the steps which led him to Wylie's side, followed by one of the sailors, who carried a portmanteau.

He stood for a single moment on the quay, and stamped his foot on the broad stones ; then heaving a deep sigh of satisfaction, he murmured,—“ Thank God ! ”

He turned towards Wylie.

“ Can you tell me, my man, at what hour the first train starts for London ? ”

“ There is a slow train at 7·30, and an express at 9.”

“ The express will serve me, and give me time for breakfast at the Adelphi. Thank you—good morning;” and the gentleman passed on, followed by the sailor.

Wylie looked after him; he noted that erect military carriage, and crisp, grey hair, and thick white moustache: he had a vague idea that he had seen that face before, and the memory troubled him.

At 7·30 Wylie started for London; the military man followed him in the express at 9, and caught him up at Watford; together they arrived at the station at Euston Square; it wanted a quarter to three. Wylie hailed a cab, but, before he could struggle through the crowd to reach it, a railway porter threw a portmanteau on its roof, and his military acquaintance took possession of it.

“ All right,” said the porter. “ What address, sir?”

Wylie did not hear what the gentleman said, but the porter shouted it to the cabman, and then he did hear it.

“ No. —, Russell Square.”

It was the house of Arthur Wardlaw !

Wylie took off his hat, rubbed his frowsy hair, and gaped after the cab.

He entered another cab and told the driver to go to "No. —, Fenchurch Street."

It was the office of Wardlaw & Son.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUR scene now changes from the wild ocean and its perils, to a snug room in Fenchurch Street; the inner office of Wardlaw & Son: a large apartment, panelled with fine old mellow Spanish oak; and all the furniture in keeping: the carpet, a thick Axminster of sober colours; the chairs, of oak and morocco, very substantial; a large office table, with oaken legs like very columns, substantial; two Milner safes; a globe of unusual size, with a handsome tent over it, made of roan leather, figured; the walls hung with long oak boxes, about eight inches broad, containing rolled maps of high quality, and great dimensions; to consult which, oaken sceptres tipped with brass hooks stood ready: with these, the great maps could be drawn down and inspected; and, on being released, flew up into their wooden boxes again. Besides these were hung up a few drawings, representing outlines, and inner

sections, of vessels: and on a smaller table, lay models, almanacks, etc. The great office-table was covered with writing materials and papers, all but a square space enclosed with a little silver rail, and inside that space lay a purple morocco case about ten inches square: it was locked, and contained an exquisite portrait of Helen Rolleston.

This apartment was so situated, and the frames of the plate glass windows so well made and substantial, that, let a storm blow a thousand ships ashore, it could not be felt, nor heard, in Wardlaw's inner office.

But appearances are deceitful; and who can wall out a sea of troubles, and the tempests of the mind?

The inmate of that office was battling for his commercial existence, under accumulated difficulties and dangers. Like those who sailed the Proserpine's long-boat upon that dirty night, which so nearly swamped her, his eye had now to be on every wave, and the sheet for ever in his hand.

His measures had been ably taken; but, as will happen when clever men are driven into a corner, he had backed events rather too freely against time; had allowed too slight a margin for unforeseen de-

lays. For instance, he had averaged the Shannon's previous performances, and had calculated on her arrival too nicely. She was a fortnight over-due, and that delay brought peril.

He had also counted upon getting news of the Proserpine. But not a word had reached Lloyd's as yet.

At this very crisis came the panic of '66. Overend & Gurney broke; and Wardlaw's experience led him to fear that, sooner or later, there would be a run on every bank in London. Now he had borrowed £80,000 at one bank, and £35,000 at another: and, without his ships, could not possibly pay a quarter of the money. If the banks in question were run upon, and obliged to call in all their resources, his credit must go; and this, in his precarious position, was ruin.

He had concealed his whole condition from his father, by false book-keeping. Indeed, he had only two confidants in the world; poor old Michael Penfold, and Helen Rolleston's portrait; and even to these two he made half confidences. He dared not tell either of them all he had done, and all he was going to do.

His redeeming feature was as bright as ever. He

still loved Helen Rolleston with a chaste, constant, and ardent affection, that did him honour. He loved money too well: but he loved Helen better. In all his troubles and worries, it was his one consolation, to unlock her portrait, and gaze on it, and purify his soul for a few minutes. Sometimes he would apologise to it, for an act of doubtful morality. "How can I risk the loss of you?" was his favourite excuse. No: he must have credit. He must have money. She must not suffer by his past imprudences. They must be repaired, at any cost—for her sake.

It was ten o'clock in the morning: Mr. Penfold was sorting the letters for his employer, when a buxom young woman rushed into the outer office, crying "Oh, Mr. Penfolds!" and sank into a chair, breathless.

"Dear heart! what is the matter now?" said the old gentleman.

"I have had a dream, sir: I dreamed I saw Joe Wylie out on the seas, in a boat; and the wind it was a blowing and the sea a roaring to that degree as Joe looked at me, and says he, 'Pray for me, Nancy Rouse.'

"So I says, 'Oh dear, Joe, what is the mat-

ter? and whatever is become of the Proserpines?"

"Says he again, 'Pray for me, Nancy Rouse!' With that, I tries to pray in my dream, and screams instead, and wakes myself. O Mr. Penfolds, do tell me, have you got any news of the Proserpines this morning?"

"What is that to you?" inquired Arthur Wardlaw, who had entered just in time to hear this last query.

"What is it to me!" cried Nancy, firing up; "it is more to me, perhaps, than it is to you, for that matter."

Penfold explained, timidly, "Sir, Mrs. Rouse is my landlady."

"Which I have never been to church with any man yet of the name of Rouse, leastways, not in my waking hours," edged in the lady.

"Miss Rouse, I should say:" said Penfold, apologising. "I beg pardon, but I thought Mrs. might sound better in a landlady. Please sir, Mr. Wylie the mate of the Proserpine is her—her—sweet-heart."

"Not he. Leastways, he is only on trial, after a manner."

“Of course, sir—only after a manner,” added Penfold, sadly perplexed. “Miss Rouse is incapable of anything else. But, if you please m’m, I don’t presume to know the exact relation:”—and then with great reserve—“but, you know you are anxious about him.”

Miss Rouse sniffed, and threw her nose in the air—as if to throw a doubt even on that view of the matter.

“Well, madam,” said Wardlaw, “I am sorry to say I can give you no information. I share your anxiety, for I have got £160,000 of gold in the ship. You might inquire at Lloyd’s. Direct her there, Mr. Penfold, and bring me my letters.”

With this he entered his inner office, sat down, took out a golden key, opened the portrait of Helen, gazed at it, kissed it, uttered a deep sigh, and prepared to face the troubles of the day.

Penfold brought in a leathern case, like an enormous bill-book: it had thirty vertical compartments: and the names of various cities and sea-ports, with which Wardlaw & Son did business, were printed in gold letters on some of these compartments; on others, the names of persons; and on two compart-

ments, the word "Miscellaneous." Michael brought this machine in, filled with a correspondence, enough to break a man's heart to look at.

This was one of the consequences of Wardlaw's position. He durst not let his correspondence be read, and filtered, in the outer office: he opened the whole mass; sent some back into the outer office: then touched a hand-bell, and a man emerged from the small apartment adjoining his own. This was Mr. Atkins, his short-hand writer. He dictated to this man some twenty letters, which were taken down in short-hand; the man retired to copy them, and write them out in duplicate from his own notes, and this reduced the number to seven: these Wardlaw sat down to write, himself, and lock up the copies.

While he was writing them, he received a visitor or two, whom he despatched as quickly as his letters.

He was writing his last letter, when he heard in the outer office a voice he thought he knew. He got up and listened. It was so. Of all the voices in the city, this was the one it most dismayed him to hear, in his office, at the present crisis.

He listened on, and satisfied himself that a fatal

blow was coming. He then walked quietly to his table, seated himself, and prepared to receive the stroke with external composure.

Penfold announced, "Mr. Burtenshaw."

"Show him in," said Wardlaw, quietly.

Mr. Burtenshaw, one of the managers of Morland's bank, came in, and Wardlaw motioned him courteously to a chair, while he finished his letter, which took only a few moments.

While he was sealing it, he half turned to his visitor, and said, "No bad news? Morland's is safe, of course."

"Well," said Burtenshaw, "we could not hope to escape the effects of the panic. There is a run upon our bank—a severe one."

He then, after an uneasy pause, and with apparent reluctance, added, "I am requested by the other directors to assure you it is their present extremity alone, that—in short, we are really compelled to beg you to repay the amount advanced to you by the bank."

Wardlaw showed no alarm, but great surprise. This was clever; for he felt great alarm, and no surprise.

"The £80,000," said he. "Why, that advance

was upon the freight of the Proserpine. Forty-five thousand ounces of gold. She ought to be here by this time. She is in the Channel at this moment, no doubt."

"Excuse me; she is overdue, and the underwriters uneasy. I have made inquiries."

"At any rate, she is fully insured, and you hold the policies. Besides, the name of Wardlaw on your books should stand for bullion."

Burtenshaw shook his head. "Names are at a discount to-day, sir. We can't pay them across our counter. Why, our depositors look cross at Bank of England notes."

To an inquiry, half ironical, whether the managers really expected him to find £80,000 cash, at a few hours' notice, Burtenshaw replied, sorrowfully, that they felt for his difficulty whilst deploring their own; but that, after all, it was a debt: and, in short, if he could find no means of paying it, they must suspend payment for a time, and issue a statement—and——"

He hesitated to complete his sentence, and Wardlaw did it for him. "And ascribe your suspension to my inability to refund this advance?" said he, bitterly.

"I am afraid that is the construction it will bear."

Wardlaw rose, to intimate he had no more to say.

Burtenshaw, however, was not disposed to go without some clear understanding. "May I say we shall hear from you, sir?"

"Yes."

And so they wished each other good-morning; and Wardlaw sank into his chair.

In that quiet dialogue, ruin had been inflicted and received without any apparent agitation; ay, and worse than ruin—exposure.

Morland's suspension, on account of money lost by Wardlaw & Son, would at once bring old Wardlaw to London, and the affairs of the firm would be investigated, and the son's false system of book-keeping be discovered.

He sat stupefied awhile, then put on his hat, and rushed to his solicitor; on the way, he fell in with a great talker, who told him there was a rumour the Shannon was lost in the Pacific.

At this he nearly fainted in the street; and his friend took him back to his office in a deplorable condition. All this time he had been feigning anxiety about the Proserpine, and concealing his

real anxiety about the Shannon. To do him justice, he lost sight of everything in the world now but Helen. He sent old Penfold in hot haste to Lloyd's, to inquire for news of the ship; and then he sat down sick at heart; and all he could do now was to open her portrait, and gaze at it through eyes blinded with tears. Even a vague rumour, which he hoped might be false, had driven all his commercial manœuvres out of him, and made all other calamities seem small.

And so they all are small, compared with the death of the creature we love.

While he sat thus in a stupor of fear and grief, he heard a well-known voice in the outer office; and, next after Burtenshaw's, it was the one that caused him the most apprehension. It was his father's.

Wardlaw senior rarely visited the office now; and this was not his hour. So Arthur knew something extraordinary had brought him up to town. And he could not doubt that it was the panic, and that he had been to Morland's, or would go there in course of the day; but, indeed, it was more probable that he had already heard something, and was come to investigate.

Wardlaw senior entered the room.

“ Good morning, Arthur,” said he. “ I’ve got good news for you.”

Arthur was quite startled by an announcement that accorded so little with his expectations.

“ Good news—for *me* ? ” said he, in a faint, incredulous tone.

“ Ay, glorious news ! Haven’t you been anxious about the Shannon ? I have ; more anxious than I would own.”

Arthur started up. “ The Shannon ! God bless you, father.”

“ She lies at anchor in the Mersey,” roared the old man, with all a father’s pride at bringing such good news. “ Why, the Rollestons will be in London at 2.30. See, here is his telegram.”

There was hearty shaking of hands, and Arthur Wardlaw was the happiest man in London.

“ Got the telegram at Elmtrees, this morning, and came up by the first express.”

The telegram was from Sir Edward Rolleston. “ *Reached Liverpool last night ; will be at Euston, two-thirty.* ”

“ Not a word from *her* ! ” said Arthur.

“Oh, there was no time to write; and ladies do not use the telegram.” He added, silyly, “Perhaps she thought coming in person would do as well, or better, eh?”

“But why does he telegraph you instead of me?”

“I am sure I don’t know. What does it matter? Yes, I do know. It is settled he and Helen are to come to me at Elmtrees, so I was the proper person to telegraph. I’ll go and meet them at the station; there is plenty of time. But, I say, Arthur, have you seen the papers? Bartley Brothers obliged to wind up. Maple & Cox, of Liverpool, gone; Atlantic trading. Terry & Brown, suspended; International credit gone. Old friends, some of these. Hopley & Timms, railway contractors, failed, sir; liabilities, seven hundred thousand pounds and more.”

“Yes, sir,” said Arthur, pompously; “1866 will long be remembered for its revelations of commercial morality.”

The old gentleman, on this, asked his son, with excusable vanity, whether he had done ill in steering clear of speculation; he then congratulated him on having listened to good advice, and stuck

to legitimate business. "I must say, Arthur," added he, "your books are models for any trading firm."

Arthur winced in secret under this praise, for it occurred to him, that in a few days his father would discover those books were all a sham, and the accounts a fabrication.

However, the unpleasant topic was soon interrupted, and effectually, too; for Michael looked in, with an air of satisfaction on his benevolent countenance, and said, "Gentlemen, such an arrival! Here is Nancy Rouse's sweetheart, that she dreamed was drowned."

"What is the man to me?" said Arthur, peevishly. He did not recognise Wylie under that title.

"La, Mr. Arthur! why he is the mate of the Proserpine," said Penfold.

"What! Wylie! Joseph Wylie?" cried Arthur, in a sudden excitement, that contrasted strangely with his previous indifference.

"What is that?" cried Wardlaw senior; "the Proserpine! Show him in at once."

Now this caused Arthur Wardlaw considerable anxiety; for obvious reasons he did not want his

father and this sailor to exchange a word together. However, that was inevitable now: the door opened, and the bronzed face and sturdy figure of Wylie, clad in a rough pea-jacket, came slouching in.

Arthur went hastily to meet him, and gave him an expressive look of warning, even while he welcomed him in cordial accents.

"Glad to see you safe home," said Wardlaw senior.

"Thank ye, guv'nor," said Wylie. "Had a squeak for it, this time."

"Where is your ship?"

Wylie shook his head sorrowfully. "Bottom of the Pacific."

"Good heavens! What; is she lost?"

"That she is, sir: foundered at sea, 1200 miles from the Horn, and more."

"And the freight? the gold?" put in Arthur, with well-feigned anxiety.

"Not an ounce saved," said Wylie, disconsolately. "A hundred and sixty thousand pounds gone to the bottom."

"Good heavens."

"Ye see, sir, said Wylie, "the ship encountered one gale after another, and laboured a good deal,

first and last; and we all say her seams must have opened; for we never could find the leak that sunk her," and he cast a meaning glance at Arthur Wardlaw.

"No matter how it happened;" said the old merchant: "are we insured to the full? that is the first question."

"To the last shilling."

"Well done, Arthur."

"But still it is most unlucky. Some weeks must elapse before the insurances can be realised, and a portion of the gold was paid for in bills at short date."

"The rest in cash?"

"Cash and merchandise."

"Then there is the proper margin. Draw on my private account, at the Bank of England."

These few simple words showed the struggling young merchant a way out of all his difficulties.

His heart leaped so, he dared not reply, lest he should excite the old gentleman's suspicions.

But, ere he had well drawn his breath for joy, came a freezer.

"Mr. Burtenshaw, sir."

"Bid him wait," said Arthur aloud, and cast a

look of great anxiety on Penfold, which the poor old man, with all his simplicity, comprehended well enough.

“Burtenshaw, from Morland’s. What does he want of us?” said Wardlaw senior, knitting his brows.

Arthur turned cold all over. “Perhaps to ask me not to draw out my balance. It is less than usual: but they are run upon; and, as you are good enough to let me draw on you——by the bye, perhaps you will sign a cheque before you go to the station.”

“How much do you want?”

“I really don’t know, till I have consulted Penfold: the gold was a large and advantageous purchase, sir.”

“No doubt; no doubt. I’ll give you my signature; and you can fill in the amount.”

He drew a cheque in favour of Arthur Wardlaw, signed it, and left him to fill in the figures.

He then looked at his watch, and remarked they would only just have time to get to the station.

“Good Heavens!” cried Arthur; “and I can’t go. I must learn the particulars of the loss of the

Proserpine, and prepare the statement at once for the underwriters."

"Well, never mind. *I can go.*"

"But what will she think of me? I ought to be the first to welcome her."

"I'll make your excuses."

"No, no; say nothing: after all it was you who received the telegram: so you naturally meet her: but you will bring her here, father: you won't whisk my darling down to Elmtrees, till you have blest me with the sight of her?"

"I will not be so cruel, fond lover," said old Wardlaw, laughing, and took up his hat and gloves to go.

Arthur went to the door with him, in great anxiety, lest he should question Burtenshaw: but, peering into the outer office, he observed Burtenshaw was not there. Michael had caught his employer's anxious look, and conveyed the Banker into the small room, where the short-hand writer was at work. But Burtenshaw was one of a struggling firm; to him every minute was an hour: he had sat, fuming with impatience, so long as he heard talking in the inner office; and, the moment it ceased, he took the liberty of coming

in: so that he opened the side door, just as Wardlaw senior was passing through the centre door.

Instantly Wardlaw junior whipped before him, to hide his figure from his retreating father.

Wylie, who all this time had been sitting silent, looking from one to the other, and quietly puzzling out the game, as well as he could, observed this movement, and grinned.

As for Arthur Wardlaw, he saw his father safe out, then gave a sigh of relief, and walked to his office table, and sat down, and began to fill in the cheque.

Burtenshaw drew near, and said, "I am instructed to say that fifty thousand pounds on account will be accepted."

Perhaps if this proposal had been made a few seconds sooner, the ingenious Arthur would have availed himself of it: but, as it was, he preferred to take the high and mighty tone. "I decline any concession," said he. "Mr. Penfold, take this cheque to the Bank of England. 81,647*l.* 10*s.* That is the amount, capital and interest, up to noon this day: hand the sum to Mr. Burtenshaw, taking his receipt, or, if he prefers it, pay it across

the counter, to my credit. That will perhaps arrest the run."

Burtenshaw stammered out his thanks.

Wardlaw cut him short. "Good morning, sir," said he. "I have business of *importance*. Good day," and bowed him out.

"This is a Highflyer," thought Burtenshaw.

Wardlaw then opened the side door, and called his short-hand writer.

"Mr. Atkins, please step into the outer office, and don't let a soul come in to me. Mind, I am out for the day. Except to Miss Rolleston and her father."

He then closed all the doors, and sunk exhausted into a chair, muttering "Thank Heaven! I have got rid of them all for an hour or two. *Now*, Wylie."

Wylie seemed in no hurry to enter upon the required subject.

Said he, evasively, "Why guv'nor, it seems to me you are among the breakers here, yourself."

"Nothing of the sort, if you have managed your work cleverly. Come, tell me all, before we are interrupted again."

"Tell ye all about it! Why there's part on't

I am afraid to think on; let alone talk about it."

"Spare me your scruples, and give me your facts," said Wardlaw, coldly. "First of all, did you succeed in shifting the bullion as agreed?"

The sailor appeared relieved by this question.

"Oh, that is all right," said he. "I got the bullion safe aboard the Shannon, marked for lead."

"And the lead on board the Proserpine?"

"Ay, shipped as bullion."

"Without suspicion?"

"Not quite."

"Great Heaven! Who?"

"One clerk at the shipping agent's scented something queer, I think. His name was James Seaton."

"Could he prove anything?"

"Nothing. He knew nothing for certain; and what he guessed won't never be known in England now." And Wylie fidgeted in his chair.

Notwithstanding this assurance Wardlaw looked grave, and took a note of that clerk's name. Then he begged Wylie to go on. "Give me all the details," said he. "Leave *me* to judge their relative value. You scuttled the ship?"

“Don’t say that! don’t say that!” cried Wylie, in a low but eager voice. “Stone walls have ears.” Then rather more loudly than was necessary, “Ship sprung a leak, that neither the captain, nor I, nor anybody could find, to stop. Me and my men, we all think her seams opened, with stress of weather.” “Then, lowering his voice again, “Try and see it as we do; and don’t you ever use such a word as that, what come out of your lips just now.” Then, raising his voice suddenly, “We pumped her hard; but ’twarn’t no use. She filled, and we had to take to the boats.”

“Stop a moment. Was there any suspicion excited?”

“Not among the crew: and, suppose there was, I could talk ’em all over, or buy ’em all over, what few of ’em is left. I’ll keep ’em all with me in one house: and they are all square, don’t you fear.”

“Well, but you said ‘among the *crew*!’ Whom else can we have to fear?”

“Why, nobody. To be sure, one of the passengers was down on me; but what does that matter now?”

“It matters greatly—it matters terribly. Who was this passenger?”

"He called himself the Reverend John Hazel. He suspected something or other; and what with listening here, and watching there, he judged the ship was never to see England, and I always fancied he told the lady."

"What, was there a lady there?"

"Ay, worse luck, sir; and a pretty girl she was: coming home to England to die of consumption; so our surgeon told me."

"Well, never mind her. The clergyman! This fills me with anxiety. A clerk suspecting us at Sydney, and a passenger suspecting us in the vessel. There are two witnesses against us already."

"No; only one."

"How do you make that out?"

"Why, White's clerk and the parson, they was one man."

Wardlaw stared in utter amazement.

"Don't ye believe me?" said Wylie. "I tell ye that there clerk boarded us under an alias. He had shaved off his beard; but, bless your heart, I knew him directly."

"He came to verify his suspicions," suggested Wardlaw, in a faint voice.

"Not he. He came for love of the sick girl, and

nothing else; and you'll never see either him or her, if that is any comfort to you."

"Be good enough to conceal nothing. Facts must be faced."

"That is too true, sir. Well, the ship went down in latitude—— but you have got a chart there before you. She went down hereabouts."

"Why, that was a long way from land," said Arthur.

"You may say that, sir. Well, we abandoned her, and took to the boats. I commanded one."

"And Hudson the other?"

"Hudson! No."

"Why, how was that? and what has become of him?"

"What has become of Hudson?" said Wylie, with a start. "There's a question! And not a drop to wet my lips, and warm my heart. Is this a tale to tell, dry? Can't ye spare a drop of brandy to a poor devil that has earned ye £160,000, and risked his life, and wrecked his soul to do it?"

Wardlaw cast a glance of contempt on him, but got up, and speedily put a bottle of old brandy, a tumbler, and a caraffe of water, on the table before him.

Wylie drank a wine-glassful neat, and gave a sort of sigh of satisfaction. And then ensued a dialogue, in which, curiously enough, the brave man was agitated, and the timid man was cool and collected. But one reason was, the latter had not imagination enough to realize things unseen, though he had caused them.

Wylie told him how Hudson got to the bottle, and would not leave the ship. "I think I see him now, with his cutlass in one hand, and his rum bottle in the other, and the waves running over his poor, silly face, as she went down. Poor Hiram! he and I had made many a trip together, before we took to this."

And Wylie shuddered, and took another gulp at the brandy.

While he was drinking to drown the picture, Wardlaw was calmly reflecting on the bare fact. "Hum," said he, "we must use that circumstance. I'll get it into the journals. Heroic captain. Went down with the ship. Who can suspect Hudson in the teeth of such a fact? Now, pray go on, my good Wylie. The boats?"

"Well, sir, I had the surgeon, and ten men, and the lady's maid, on board the long-boat; and there

was the parson, the sick lady, and five sailors aboard the cutter. We sailed together, till night, steering for Juan Fernandez; then a fog came on and we lost sight of the cutter, and I altered my mind and judged it best to beat to win'ard, and get into the track of ships. Which we did, and were nearly swamped in a sou'wester; but, by good luck, a Yankee whaler picked us up, and took us to Buenos Ayres, where we shipped for England, what was left of us, only three, besides myself; but I got the signatures of the others to my tale of the wreck. It is all as square as a die, I tell you."

"Well done. Well done. But, stop! the other boat, with that sham parson on board who knows all. She will be picked up, too, perhaps."

"There is no chance of that. She was out of the tracks of trade; and, I'll tell ye the truth, sir"—He poured out half a tumbler of brandy, and drank a part of it; and, now, for the first time, his hand trembled as he lifted the glass.—"Some fool had put the main of her provisions aboard the long-boat; that is what sticks to me, and won't let me sleep. We took a chance, but we didn't give one. I think I told you there was a woman aboard the cutter, that sick girl, sir. O, but it was hard

lines for her, poor thing! I see her face, pale and calm; oh, Lord, so pale and calm; every night of my life; she kneeled aboard the cutter with her white hands clasped together, praying."

"Certainly, it is all very shocking," said Wardlaw; "but then, you know, if they had escaped, they would have exposed us. Believe me, it is all for the best."

Wylie looked at him with wonder. "Ay," said he, after staring at him a long time; "you can sit here at your ease, and doom a ship, and risk her people's lives. But if you had to do it, and see it, and then lie awake thinking of it, you'd wish all the gold on earth had been in hell, before you put your hand to such a piece of work."

Wardlaw smiled a ghastly smile. "In short," said he, "you don't mean to take the two thousand pounds I pay you for this little job."

"Oh yes, I do; but, for all the gold in Victoria, I wouldn't do such a job again. And, you mark my words, sir, we shall get the money, and nobody will ever be the wiser."—Wardlaw rubbed his hands complacently, his egotism, coupled with his want of imagination, nearly blinded him to everything but the pecuniary feature of the business.—"But,"

continued Wylie, "we shall never thrive on it. We have sunk a good ship, and we have as good as murdered a poor dying girl."

"Hold your tongue, ye fool!" cried Wardlaw, losing his sangfroid in a moment, for he heard somebody at the door.

It opened, and there stood a military figure in a travelling cap—General Rolleston.

CHAPTER XV.

As some eggs have actually two yolks, so Arthur Wardlaw had two hearts; and at sight of Helen's father, the baser one ceased to beat for a while.

He ran to General Rolleston, shook him warmly by the hand, and welcomed him to England with sparkling eyes.

It is pleasant to be so welcomed, and the stately soldier returned his grasp in kind.

"Is Helen with you, sir?" said Wardlaw, making a movement to go to the door: for he thought she must be outside in the cab.

"No, she is not," said General Rolleston.

"There now," said Arthur, "that cruel father of mine has broken his promise, and carried her off to Elmtrees."

At this moment Wardlaw senior returned, to tell Arthur he had been just too late to meet the

Rollestons. "Oh, here he is!" said he; and there were fresh greetings.

"Well, but," said Arthur, "where is Helen?"

"I think it is I who ought to ask that question," said Rolleston, gravely. "I telegraphed you at Elmtrees, thinking of course she would come with you to meet me at the station. It does not much matter, a few hours: but her not coming makes me uneasy, for her health was declining when she left me. How is my child, Mr. Wardlaw? Pray tell me the truth."

Both the Wardlaws looked at one another, and at General Rolleston, and the elder Wardlaw said there was certainly some misunderstanding here.

"We fully believed that your daughter was coming home with you in the Shannon."

"Come home with me? Why, of course not. She sailed three weeks before me. Has she not arrived?"

"No," replied old Wardlaw, "we have neither seen nor heard of her."

"Why, what ship did she sail in?" said Arthur.

"In one of your own ships—the Proserpine."

Arthur Wardlaw fixed on the speaker a gaze

full of horror ; his jaw fell ; a livid pallor spread over his features ; he echoed in a hoarse whisper, " the Proserpine ! " and turned his scared eyes upon Wylie, who was himself leaning against the wall, his stalwart frame beginning to tremble.

" The sick girl," murmured Wylie, and a cold sweat gathered on his brow.

General Rolleston looked from one to another with strange misgivings, which soon deepened into a sense of some terrible calamity ; for now a strong convulsion swelled Arthur Wardlaw's heart ; his face worked fearfully ; and with a sharp and sudden cry, he fell forward on the table, and his father's arm alone prevented him from sinking like a dead man on the floor. Yet though crushed and helpless, he was not insensible ; that blessing was denied him.

General Rolleston implored an explanation.

Wylie, with downcast and averted face, began to stammer a few disconnected and unintelligible words ; but old Wardlaw silenced him and said, with much feeling, " Let none but a father tell him. My poor, poor friend—The Proserpine ! How can I say it ? "

" Lost at sea," groaned Wylie.

At these fatal words the old warrior's countenance grew rigid ; his large, bony hands gripped the back of the chair, on which he leaned, and were white with their own convulsive force ; and he bowed his head under the blow, without one word.

His was an agony too great and mute to be spoken to ; and there was silence in the room, broken only by the hysterical moans of the miserable plotter, who had drawn down this calamity on his own head. He was in no state to be left alone ; and even the bereaved father found pity in his desolate heart for one who loved his lost child so well ; and the two old men took him home between them, in a helpless and pitiable condition.

CHAPTER XVI.

BUT this utter prostration of his confederate began to alarm Wylie, and rouse him to exertion. Certainly, he was very sorry for what he had done, and would have undone it and forfeited his £2,000 in a moment, if he could. But, as he could not undo the crime, he was all the more determined to reap the reward. Why that £2,000, for aught he knew, was the price of his soul; and he was not the man to let his soul go gratis.

He finished the rest of the brandy, and went after his men, to keep them true to him by promises; but the next day he came to the office in Fenchurch Street, and asked anxiously for Wardlaw. Wardlaw had not arrived. He waited, but the merchant never came; and Michael told him, with considerable anxiety, that this was the first time his young master had missed coming this five years.

In course of the day, several underwriters came in, with long faces, to verify the report which had now reached Lloyd's, that the Proserpine had foundered at sea.

"It is too true," said Michael; "and poor Mr. Wylie here has barely escaped with his life. He was mate of the ship, gentlemen."

Upon this, each visitor questioned Wylie, and Wylie returned the same smooth answer to all inquiries: one heavy gale after another had so tried the ship that her seams had opened, and let in more water than all the exertions of the crew and passengers could discharge; at last, they had taken to the boats; the long-boat had been picked up: the cutter had never been heard of since.

They nearly all asked after the ship's log.

"I have got it safe at home," said he. It was in his pocket all the time.

Some asked him where the other survivors were. He told them five had shipped on board the Maria, and three were with him at Poplar, one disabled by the hardships they had all endured.

One or two complained angrily of Mr. Wardlaw's absence at such a time.

"Well, good gentlemen," said Wylie, "I'll tell

ye. Mr. Wardlaw's sweetheart was aboard the ship. He is a'most broken-hearted. He vallied her more than all the gold, that you may take your oath on."

This stroke, coming from a rough fellow in a pea-jacket, who looked as simple as he was cunning, silenced remonstrance, and went far to disarm suspicion; and so pleased Michael Penfold, that he said, "Mr. Wylie, you are interested in this business, would you mind going to Mr. Wardlaw's house, and asking what we are to do next? I'll give you his address, and a line, begging him to make an effort and see you. Business is the heart's best ointment. Eh, dear Mr. Wylie, I have known grief too; and I think I should have gone mad when they sent my poor son away, but for business, especially the summing-up of long columns, &c."

This commission suited Mr. Wylie, who was alarmed on his own account at Arthur Wardlaw's absence from business. He called at the house in Russell Square, and asked to see Mr. Wardlaw.

The servant shook his head. "You can't see him; he is very ill."

"Very ill," said Wylie. "I'm sorry for that."

Well, but I shan't make him any worse; and Mr. Penfold says I must see him. It is very particular, I tell you. He won't thank you for refusing me, when he comes to hear of it."

He said this very seriously; and the servant, after a short hesitation, begged him to sit down in the passage a moment. He then went into the dining-room, and shortly reappeared, holding the door open. Out came, not Wardlaw junior, but Wardlaw senior.

"My son is in no condition to receive you," said he, gravely; "but I am at your service. What is your business?"

Wylie was taken off his guard, and stammered out something about the Shannon.

"The Shannon! What have you to do with her? You belonged to the Proserpine."

"Ay, sir; but I had his orders to ship forty chests of lead and smelted copper on board the Shannon."

"Well?"

"Ye see, sir," said Wylie, "Mr. Wardlaw was particular about them, and I feel responsible like, having shipped them aboard another vessel."

"Have you not the captain's receipt?"

"That I have, sir, at home. But you could hardly read it for salt-water."

"Well," said Wardlaw senior, "I will direct our agent at Liverpool to look after them, and send them up at once to my cellars in Fenchurch Street. Forty chests of lead and copper, I think you said." And he took a note of this directly. Wylie was not a little discomfited at this unexpected turn things had taken; but he held his tongue now, for fear of making bad worse. Wardlaw senior went on to say that he should have to conduct the business of the firm for a time, in spite of his old age and failing health.

This announcement made Wylie perspire with anxiety, and his £2,000 seemed to melt away from him.

"But never mind," said old Wardlaw; "I am very glad you came. In fact, you are the very man I wanted to see. My poor afflicted friend has asked after you several times. Be good enough to follow me."

He led the way into the dining-room, and there sat the sad father in all the quiet dignity of calm, unfathomable sorrow.

Another gentleman stood upon the rug with his

back to the fire, waiting for Mr. Wardlaw; this was the family physician, who had just come down from Arthur's bedroom, and had entered by another door, through the drawing-room.

"Well, doctor," said Wardlaw, anxiously, "what is your report?"

"Not so good as I could wish; but nothing to excite immediate alarm. Overtaxed brain, sir; weakened and unable to support this calamity. However, we have reduced the fever; the symptoms of delirium have been checked, and I think we shall escape brain-fever, if he is kept quite quiet. I could not have said as much this morning."

The doctor then took his leave, with a promise to call next morning; and as soon as he was gone, Wardlaw turned to General Rolleston, and said, "Here *is* Wylie, sir. Come forward, my man, and speak to the General. He wants to know if you can point out to him on the chart the very spot where the Proserpine was lost?"

"Well, sir," said Wylie, "I think I could."

The great chart of the Pacific was then spread out upon the table, and rarely has a chart been examined as this was, with the bleeding heart as well as the straining eye.

The rough sailor became an oracle; the others hung upon his words, and followed his brown finger on the chart with fearful interest.

“Ye see, sir,” said he, addressing the old merchant, for there was something on his mind that made him avoid speaking directly to General Rolleston, “when we came out of Sydney, the wind being south and by east, Hudson took the easterly course, instead of running through Cook’s straits. The weather freshened from the same quarter, so that, with one thing and another, by when we were a month out, she was five hundred miles or so nor’ard of her true course. But that wasn’t all; when the leak gained on us, Hudson ran the ship three hundred miles by my reckoning to the nor’-east; and, I remember, the day before she foundered, he told me she was in latitude forty, and Easter Island bearing due north.”

“Here is the spot, then,” said General Rolleston, and placed his finger on the spot.

“Ay, sir,” said Wylie, addressing the merchant; “but she ran about eighty-five miles after that, on an easterly course—no—wind on her starboard quarter—and being deep in the water, she’d make lee way—say eighty-two miles, nor’-east by east.”

The General took eighty-two miles off the scale, with a pair of dividers, and set out that distance on the chart. He held the instrument fixed on the point thus obtained.

Wylie eyed the point, and after a moment's consideration, nodded his head.

"There, or thereabouts," he said, in a low voice, and looking at the merchant.

A pause ensued, and the two old men examined the speck pricked on the map, as if it were the waters covering the Proserpine.

"Now sir," said Rolleston, "trace the course of the boats ;" and he handed Wylie a pencil.

The sailor slowly averted his head, but stretched out his hand and took it, and traced two lines, the one short and straight, running nearly north-east. "That's the way the cutter headed when we lost her in the night."

The other line ran parallel to the first for half an inch, then turning, bent backwards, and ran due south.

"This was *our* course," said Wylie.

General Rolleston looked up, and said, "Why did you desert the cutter?"

The mate looked at old Wardlaw, and, after some

hesitation, replied, "After we lost sight of her, the men with me declared that we could not reach either Juan Fernandez or Valparaiso with our stock of provisions, and insisted on standing for the sea track of Australian liners between the Horn and Sydney."

This explanation was received in dead silence. Wylie fidgetted, and his eye wandered round the room.

General Rolleston applied his compasses to the chart. "I find that the Proserpine was not 1000 miles from Easter Island. Why did you not make for that land?"

"We had no charts, sir," said Wylie to the merchant, "and I'm no navigator."

"I see no land laid down hereaway, north-east of the spot where the ship went down."

"No," replied Wylie, "that's what the men said when they made me 'bout ship."

"Then why did you lead the way north-east at all?"

"I'm no navigator," answered the man, sullenly.

He then suddenly stammered out. "Ask my men what *we* went through. Why, sir, (to Wardlaw) I can hardly believe that I am alive, and si

here talking to you about this cursed business. And nobody offers me a drop of anything."

Wardlaw poured him out a tumbler of wine. His brown hand trembled a little, and he gulped the wine down like water.

General Rolleston gave Mr. Wardlaw a look, and Wylie was dismissed. He slouched down the street all in a cold perspiration; but still clinging to his £2,000, though small was now his hope of ever seeing it.

When he was gone, General Rolleston paced that large and gloomy room in silence. Wardlaw eyed him with the greatest interest, but avoided speaking to him. At last he stopped short, and stood erect, as veterans halt, and pointed down at the chart.

"I'll start at once for that spot," said he. "I'll go in the next ship bound to Valparaiso: there I'll charter a small vessel, and ransack those waters for some trace of my poor lost girl."

"Can you think of no better way than that?" said old Wardlaw, gently, and with a slight tone of reproach.

"No—not at this moment. Oh, yes, by the bye, the Greyhound and Dreadnought are going out to

survey the islands of the Pacific. I have interest enough to get a berth in the Greyhound."

"What! go in a Government ship! under the orders of a man, under the orders of another man, under the orders of a Board. Why, if you heard our poor girl was alive upon a rock, the Dreadnought would be sure to run up a bunch of red-tape to the fore that moment to recall the Greyhound, and the Greyhound would go back. No," said he, rising suddenly, and confronting the General, and with the colour mounting for once in his sallow face, "You sail in no bottom but one freighted by Wardlaw & Son, and the captain shall be under no orders but yours. We have bought the steam sloop Springbok, 700 tons. I'll victual her for a year, man her well, and you shall go out in her in less than a week. I give you my hand on that."

They grasped hands.

But this sudden warmth and tenderness coming from a man habitually cold, overpowered the stout general. "What, sir," he faltered; "your own son lies in danger, yet your heart goes so with me—such goodness—it is too much for me."

"No, no," faltered the merchant, affected in his

turn; "it is nothing. Your poor girl was coming home in that cursed ship to marry my son. Yes, he lies ill for love of her; God help him and me too; but you most of all. Don't, General; don't! We have got work to do; we must be brave, sir; brave I say, and compose ourselves. Ah, my friend, you and I are of one age; and this is a heavy blow for us: and we are friends no more; it has made us brothers: she was to be my child as well as yours; well, now she *is* my child, and our hearts they bleed together." At this, the truth must be told, the two stout old men embraced one another like two women, and cried together a little.

But that was soon over with such men as these. They sat together and plunged into the details of the expedition, and they talked themselves into hope.

In a week the Springbok steamed down the Channel on an errand inspired by love not reason; to cross one mighty ocean, and grope for a lost daughter in another.

CHAPTER XVII.

WE return to the cutter, and her living freight.

After an anxious but brief consultation, it was agreed that their best chance was to traverse as many miles of water as possible, while the wind was fair; by this means they would increase their small chance of being picked up, and also of falling in with land, and would, at all events, sail into a lovely climate where intense cold was unknown, and gales of wind uncommon.

Mr. Hazel advised them to choose a skipper, and give him absolute power, especially over the provisions. They assented to this. He then recommended Cooper for that post. But they had not fathomed the sterling virtues of that taciturn seaman; so they offered the command to Welch, instead.

“Me put myself over Sam Cooper!” said he; “not likely.”

Then their choice fell upon Michael Morgan. The other sailors' names were Prince, Fenner, and Mackintosh.

Mr. Hazel urged Morgan to put the crew and passengers on short allowance at once, viz.: two biscuits a day, and four table-spoonsful of water: but Morgan was a common sailor; he could not see clearly very far ahead; and, moreover, his own appetite counteracted this advice; he dealt out a pound of biscuit and an ounce of ham to each person, night and morning, and a pint of water in the course of the day.

Mr. Hazel declined his share of the ham, and begged Miss Rolleston, so earnestly, not to touch it, that she yielded a silent compliance.

On the fourth day the sailors were all in good spirits, though the provisions were now very low. They even sang, and spun yarns. This was partly owing to the beauty of the weather.

On the fifth day Morgan announced that he could only serve out one biscuit per day: and this sudden decline caused some dissatisfaction and alarm.

Next day, the water ran so low, that only a tea-spoonful was served out night and morning.

There were murmurs and forebodings.

In all heavy trials and extremities some man or other reveals great qualities, that were latent in him, ay, hidden from himself. And this general observation was verified on the present occasion, as it had been in the Indian mutiny, and many other crises. Hazel came out.

He encouraged the men, out of his multifarious stores of learning. He related at length stories of wrecks and sufferings at sea; which, though they had long been in print, were most of them new to these poor fellows. He told them, among the rest, what the men of the *Bona Dea*, waterlogged at sea, had suffered—twelve days without any food but a rat and a kitten—yet had all survived. He gave them some details of the *Wager*, the *Grosvenor*, the *Corbin*, the *Medusa*; but, above all, a most minute account of the *Bounty*, and Bligh's wonderful voyage in an open boat, short of provisions. He moralised on this, and showed his fellow-sufferers it was discipline and self-denial from the first, that had enabled those hungry spectres to survive, and to traverse two thousand eight hundred miles of water, in those very seas; and that in spite of hunger, thirst, disease, and rough weather.

By these means he diverted their minds, in some degree, from their own calamity, and taught them the lesson they most needed.

The poor fellows listened with more interest than you could have thought possible under the pressure of bodily distress. And Helen Rolleston's hazel eye dwelled on the narrator with unceasing wonder.

Yes, learning and fortitude, strengthened by those great examples learning furnishes, maintained a superiority, even in the middle of the Pacific; and not the rough sailors only, but the lady, who had rejected and scorned his love, hung upon the brave student's words: she was compelled to look up, with wonder, to the man she had hated and despised in her hours of ease.

On the sixth day the provisions failed entirely. Not a crust of bread: not a drop of water.

At 4 P. M., several flying fish, driven into the air by the dolphins and cat fish, fell into the sea again near the boat, and one struck the sail sharply, and fell into the boat. It was divided, and devoured raw, in a moment.

The next morning the wind fell, and, by noon, the ocean became like glass.

The horrors of a storm have been often painted ; but who has described, or can describe, the horrors of a calm, to a boat-load of hungry, thirsty creatures, whose only chances of salvation or relief, are wind and rain ?

The beautiful, remorseless, sky, was one vault of purple, with a great flaming jewel in the centre, whose vertical rays struck, and parched, and scorched, the living sufferers ; and blistered, and baked, the boat itself, so that it hurt their hot hands to touch it : the beautiful, remorseless ocean was one sheet of glass, that glared in their blood-shot eyes, and reflected the intolerable heat of heaven upon these poor wretches, who were gnawed to death with hunger ; and their raging thirst was fiercer still.

Towards afternoon of the eighth day, Mackintosh dipped a vessel in the sea, with the manifest intention of drinking the salt water.

“Stop him !” cried Hazel, in great agitation ; and the others seized him, and overpowered him : he cursed them with such horrible curses, that Miss Rolleston put her fingers in her ears, and shuddered from head to foot. Even this was new to her, to hear foul language.

A calm voice rose in the midst, and said:—
“Let us pray.”

There was a dead silence, and Mr. Hazel kneeled down and prayed loud and fervently; and, while he prayed, the furious cries subsided for a while, and deep groans only were heard. He prayed for food, for rain, for wind, for Patience.

The men were not so far gone but they could just manage to say “Amen.”

He rose from his knees, and gathered the pale faces of the men together in one glance; and saw that intense expression of agony, which physical pain can mould with men’s features: and then he strained his eyes over the brassy horizon; but no cloud, no veil of vapour was visible.

“Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink.”

“We must be mad,” he cried, “to die of thirst, with all this water round us.”

His invention being stimulated by this idea, and his own dire need, he eagerly scanned every thing in the boat, and his eyes soon lighted on two objects, disconnected in themselves, but it struck him he could use them in combination. These were a common glass bottle, and Miss Rolleston’s

life-preserving jacket, that served her for a couch, He drew this garment over his knees, and considered it attentively; then untwisted the brass nozzle through which the jacket was inflated, and so left a tube, some nine inches in length, hanging down from the neck of the garment.

He now applied his breath to the tube, and the jacket swelling rapidly proved that the whole receptacle was air-tight.

He then allowed the air to escape. Next, he took the bottle and filled it with water from the sea; then he inserted, with some difficulty, and great care, the neck of the bottle into the orifice of the tube: this done, he detached the wire of the brass nozzle, and whipped the tube firmly round the neck of the bottle.

“Now, light a fire,” he cried; “no matter what it costs.”

The fore thwart was chopped up, and a fire soon spluttered and sparkled, for ten eager hands were feeding it: the bottle was then suspended over it, and, in due course, the salt-water boiled and threw off vapour, and the belly of the jacket began to heave and stir. Hazel then threw cold water upon the outside, to keep it cool, and, while the men

eagerly watched the bubbling bottle and swelling bag, his spirits rose, and he took occasion to explain that what was now going on under their eyes was, after all, only one of the great processes of Nature, done upon a small scale. "The clouds," said he, "are but vapours drawn from the sea, by the heat of the sun: these clouds are composed of fresh water, and so the steam we are now raising from salt-water will be fresh. We can't make whiskey, or brew beer, lads; but, thank Heaven, we can brew water; and it is worth all other liquors ten times told."

A wild "Hurrah!" greeted these words.

But every novel experiment seems doomed to fail, or meet with some disaster. The water in the bottle had been reduced too low, by vaporisation, and the bottle burst suddenly, with a loud report. That report was followed by a piteous wail.

Hazel turned pale at this fatal blow: but recovering himself, he said, "That is unfortunate: but it was a good servant while it lasted: give me the baler; and, Miss Rolleston, can you lend me a thimble?"

The tube of the life-preserver was held over the baler, and out trickled a small quantity of pure

water, two thimblesful a-piece. Even that, as it passed over their swollen tongues and parched swallows, was a heavenly relief; but, alas, the supply was then exhausted.

Next day hunger seemed uppermost, and the men gnawed and chewed their tobacco pouches: and two caps, that had been dressed with the hair on, were divided for food.

None was given to Mr. Hazel or Miss Rolleston; and this, to do the poor creatures justice, was the first instance of partiality the sailors had shown.

The lady, though tormented with hunger, was more magnanimous; she offered to divide the contents of her little medicine chest; and the globules were all devoured in a moment.

And now their tortures were aggravated by the sight of abundance. They drifted over coral rocks, at a considerable depth, but the water was so exquisitely clear that they saw five fathoms down. They discerned small fish drifting over the bottom; they looked like a driving cloud, so vast was their number; and every now and then there was a scurry among them, and porpoises and dog-fish broke in and feasted on them. All this they saw, yet could not catch one of those billions for their

lives. Thus they were tantalized as well as starved.

The next day was like the last, with this difference, that the sufferers could no longer endure their torments in silence.

The lady moaned constantly: the sailors groaned, lamented, and cursed.

The sun baked, and blistered; and the water glared.

The sails being useless, the sailors rigged them as an awning, and salt water was constantly thrown over them.

Mr. Hazel took a baler and drenched his own clothes and Miss Rolleston's upon their bodies. This relieved the hell of thirst in some degree: but the sailors could not be persuaded to practise it.

In the afternoon Hazel took Miss Rolleston's Bible from her wasted hands, and read aloud the forty-second Psalm.

When he had done, one of the sailors asked him to pass the Bible forward. He did so; and in half-an-hour the leaves were returned him; the vellum binding had been cut off, divided, and eaten.

He looked piteously at the leaves, and, after a while, fell upon his knees, and prayed silently.

He rose, and, with Miss Rolleston's consent, offered the men the leaves as well. "It is the Bread of Life for men's souls, not their bodies," said he. "But God is merciful; I think he will forgive you; for your need is bitter."

Cooper replied that the binding was man's, but the pages were God's; and, either for this or another more obvious reason, the leaves were declined for food.

All that afternoon Hazel was making a sort of rough spoon out of a fragment of wood.

The night that followed was darker than usual, and, about midnight, a hand was laid on Helen Rolleston's shoulder, and a voice whispered, "Hush! say nothing. I have got something for you."

At the same time, something sweet and deliciously fragrant, was put to her lips; she opened her mouth, and received a spoonful of marmalade. Never did marmalade taste like that before. It dissolved itself like Ambrosia over her palate, and even relieved her parched throat in some slight degree by the saliva it excited.

Nature could not be resisted; her body took whatever he gave. But her high mind rebelled.

"Oh, how base I am," said she, and wept.

"Why, it is your own," said he, soothingly; "I took it out of your cabin expressly for you."

"At least, oblige me by eating some yourself, sir," said Helen, "or (with a sudden burst) I will die ere I touch another morsel."

"I feel the threat, Miss Rolleston; but I do not need it, for I am very, very hungry. But no; if *I* take any, I must divide it all with *them*. But if you will help me unrip the jacket, I will suck the inside—after you."

Helen gazed at him, and wondered at the man, and at the strange love which had so bitterly offended her, when she was surrounded by comforts; but now it extorted her respect.

They unripped the jacket, and found some moisture left. They sucked it, and it was a wonderful, an incredible relief to their parched gullets.

The next day was a fearful one. Not a cloud in the sky to give hope of rain; the air so light, it only just moved them along; and the sea glared, and the sun beat on the poor wretches, now tortured into madness with hunger and thirst.

The body of man, in this dire extremity, can suffer internal agony as acute as any that can be inflicted on its surface by the knife; and the cries, the screams, the groans, the prayers, the curses, intermingled, that issued from the boat, were not to be distinguished from the cries of men horribly wounded in battle, or writhing under some terrible operation in hospitals.

Oh, it was terrible and piteous to see and hear the boat-load of ghastly victims, with hollow cheeks, and wild-beast eyes, go groaning, cursing, and shrieking loud, upon that fair glassy sea, below that purple vault and glorious sun.

Towards afternoon, the sailors got together, forward, and left Hazel and Miss Rolleston alone in the stern. This gave him an opportunity of speaking to her confidentially. He took advantage of it, and said, "Miss Rolleston, I wish to consult you. Am I justified in secreting the marmalade any longer? There is nearly a spoonful a-piece."

"No," said Helen, "divide it amongst them all. Oh, if I had only a woman beside me, to pray with, and cry with, and die with: for die we must."

"I am not so sure of that," said Hazel, faintly, but with a cool fortitude all his own. "Experience

proves that the human body can subsist a prodigious time on very little food : and saturating the clothes with water is, I know, the best way to allay thirst. And women, thank heaven, last longer than men, under privations."

"I shall not last long, sir," said Helen. "Look at their eyes."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that those men there are going to kill me."

CHAPTER XVIII.

HAZEL thought her reason was going; and, instead of looking at the men's eyes, it was hers he examined. But no; the sweet cheek was white, the eyes had a fearful hollow all round them, but, out of that cave, the light hazel eye, preternaturally large, but calm as ever, looked out, full of fortitude, resignation, and reason.

"Don't look at *me*," said she, quietly; "but take an opportunity and look at *them*. They mean to kill me."

Hazel looked furtively round; and, being enlightened in part by the woman's intelligence, he observed that some of the men were actually glaring at himself and Helen Rolleston, in a dreadful way. There was a remarkable change in their eyes since he looked last. The pupils seemed diminished, the whites enlarged; and, in a word, the characteristics of humanity had, some-

how, died out of those bloodshot orbs, and the animal alone shone in them now; the wild beast, driven desperate by hunger.

What he saw, coupled with Helen's positive interpretation of it, was truly sickening.

These men were six, and he but one. They had all clasp knives; and he had only an old penknife that would be sure to double up, or break off, if a blow were dealt with it.

He asked himself, in utter terror, what on earth he should do.

The first thing seemed to be to join the men, and learn their minds: it might also be as well to prevent this secret conference from going further.

He went forward boldly, though sick at heart, and said, "Well, my lads, what is it?"

The men were silent directly, and looked sullenly down, avoiding his eye; yet not ashamed.

In a situation so terrible, the senses are sharpened; and Hazel dissected, in his mind, this sinister look, and saw that Morgan, Prince, and Mackintosh were hostile to him.

But Welch and Cooper he hoped were still friendly.

"Sir," said Fenner, civilly but doggedly, "we

are come to this now, that one must die, for the others to live: and the greater part of us are for casting lots all round, and let every man, and every woman too, take their chance. That is fair, Sam, isn't it?"

"It is fair," said Cooper, with a terrible doggedness. "But it is hard," he added.

"Harder that seven should die for one," said Mackintosh. "No, no: one must die for the seven."

Hazel represented, with all the force language possesses, that what they meditated was a crime, the fatal result of which was known by experience.

But they heard in ominous silence.

Hazel went back to Helen Rolleston: and sat down right before her.

"Well!" said she, with supernatural calmness.

"You were mistaken," said he.

"Then why have you placed yourself between them and me. No; no: their eyes have told me they have singled me out. But what does it matter? We poor creatures are all to die; and that one is the happiest that dies first, and dies unstained by such a crime. *I heard every word you said, sir!*"

Hazel cast a piteous look on her, and, finding he could no longer deceive her as to their danger, and being weakened by famine, fell to trembling and crying.

Helen Rolleston looked at him with calm and gentle pity. For a moment, the patient fortitude of a woman made her a brave man's superior.

Night came, and, for the first time, Hazel claimed two portions of the rum; one for himself, and one for Miss Rolleston.

He then returned aft, and took the helm. He loosened it, so as to be ready to unship it in a moment, and use it as a weapon.

The men huddled together forward; and it was easy to see that the boat was now divided into two hostile camps.

Hazel sat quaking with his hand on the helm, fearing an attack every moment.

Both he and Helen listened acutely, and about three o'clock in the morning, a new incident occurred, of a terrible nature.

Mackintosh was heard to say "Serve out the rum, no allowance," and the demand was instantly complied with by Morgan.

Then Hazel touched Miss Rolleston on the

shoulder, and insisted on her taking half what was left of the marmalade: and he took the other half. The time was gone by for economy: what they wanted now was strength, in case the wild beasts, maddened by drink, as well as hunger, should attack them.

Already the liquor had begun to tell, and wild hallos and yells, and even fragments of ghastly songs, mingled with the groans of misery, in the doomed boat.

At sunrise there was a great swell upon the water, with sharp gusts at intervals; and on the horizon, to windward, might be observed a black spot in the sky, no bigger than a fly. But none saw that; Hazel's eye never left the raving wretches in the forepart of the boat; Cooper and Welch sat in gloomy despair amidships; and the others were huddled together forward, encouraging each other to a desperate act.

It was about eight o'clock in the morning, Helen Rolleston awoke from a brief doze, and said, "Mr. Hazel, I have had a strange dream. I dreamed there was food, and plenty of it, on the outside of this boat."

While these strange words were yet in her mouth,

three of the sailors suddenly rose up with their knives drawn, and eyes full of murder, and staggered aft as fast as their enfeebled bodies could.

Hazel uttered a loud cry, "Welch! Cooper! will you see us butchered?" and rose to his feet.

Cooper put out his arm to stop Mackintosh, but was too late. He did stop Morgan, however, and said, "Come, none of that; no foul play!"

Irritated by this unexpected resistance, and maddened by drink, Morgan turned on Cooper and stabbed him; he sank down with a groan. On this Welch gave Morgan a fearful gash, dividing his jugular, and was stabbed, in return, by Prince, but not severely: these two grappled and rolled over one another, stabbing and cursing at the bottom of the boat; meantime, Hazel had unshipped the helm, and Mackintosh was received by him with a point blank thrust in the face from it that staggered him, though a very powerful man, and drove him backwards against the mast; but, in delivering this thrust, Hazel's foot slipped, and he fell with great violence on his head and arm; Mackintosh recovered himself, and sprang upon the stern thwart with his knife up and gleaming over Helen Rolleston. Hazel writhed round where he lay, and struck him despe-

rately on the knee with the helm. The poor woman knew only how to suffer; she cowered a little, and put up two feeble hands.

The knife descended.

But not upon that cowering figure.

CHAPTER XIX.

A PURPLE rippling line upon the water had for some little time been coming down from the east with great rapidity: but, bent on bloody work, the crew had not observed it. The boat heeled over under the sudden gust; but Mackintosh had already lost his footing under Hazel's blow, and the boom striking him suddenly almost at the same moment, he went clean over the gunwale into the sea; he struck it with his knife first.

All their lives were now gone if Cooper, who had already recovered his feet, had not immediately cut the sheet with his knife; there was no time to slack it; and, even as it was, the lower part of the sail was drenched, and the boat full of water.

"Ship the helm," he roared.

The boat righted directly the sheet was cut, the wet sail flapped furiously, and the boat having way

on her yielded to the helm and wriggled slowly away before the whistling wind.

Mackintosh rose a few yards astern, and swam after the boat, with great glaring eyes; the loose sail was not drawing, but the wind moved the boat onward. However, Mackintosh gained slowly, and Hazel held up an oar like a spear, and shouted to him that he must promise solemnly to forego all violence, or he should never come on board alive.

Mackintosh opened his mouth to reply; but, at the same moment, his eyes suddenly dilated in a fearful way, and he went under water, with a gurgling cry. Yet, not like one drowning, but with a jerk.

The next moment there was a great bubbling of the water, as if displaced by some large creatures struggling below, and then the surface was stained with blood.

And, lest there should be any doubt as to the wretched man's fate, the huge back fin of a monstrous shark came soon after, gliding round and round the rolling boat, awaiting the next victim.

Now, while the water was yet stained with his life blood, who, hurrying to kill, had met a violent death, the unwounded sailor, Fenner, excited by the

fracas, broke forth into singing, and so completed the horror of a wild and awful scene : for still while he shouted, laughed, and sang, the shark swam calmly round and round, and the boat crept on, her white sail bespattered with blood—which was not so before—and in her bottom lay one man dead as a stone ; and two poor wretches, Prince and Welch, their short-lived feud composed for ever, sat openly sucking their bleeding wounds, to quench, for a moment, their intolerable thirst.

Oh, little do we, who never pass a single day without bite or sup, know the animal, Man, in these dire extremities.

CHAPTER XX.

AT last Cooper ordered Fenner to hold his jaw, and come aft, and help sail the boat.

But the man, being now stark mad, took no notice of the order. His madness grew on him, and took a turn by no means uncommon in these cases. He saw before him sumptuous feasts, and streams of fresh water flowing. These he began to describe with great volubility and rapture, smacking his lips, and exulting: and so he went on tantalizing them til noon.

Meantime, Cooper asked Mr. Hazel if he could sail the boat. The squall had passed, and the breeze was now steady from the south-west.

"I can steer," said Hazel, "but that is all. My right arm is benumbed."

The silvery voice of Helen Rolleston then uttered

brave and welcome words. "I will do whatever you tell me, Mr. Cooper."

"Long life to you, Miss!" said the wounded seaman. He then directed her how to reef the sail, and splice the sheet which he had been obliged to cut; and in a word, to sail the boat; which she did with some little assistance from Hazel.

And so they all depended upon her, whom some of them had been for killing: and the blood-stained boat glided before the wind.

At two P.M. Fenner jumped suddenly up, and looking at the sea with rapture, cried out, "Aha! my boys, here's a beautiful green meadow; and there's a sweet brook with bulrushes: green, green, green! Let's have a roll among the daisies." And, in a moment, ere any of his stiff and wounded shipmates could put out a hand, he threw himself on his back upon the water, and sunk for ever, with inexpressible rapture on his corpse-like face.

A feeble groan was the only tribute those who remained behind could afford him.

At three P.M. Mr. Hazel happened to look over

the weather-side of the boat, as she heeled to leeward under a smart breeze, and he saw a shell or two fastened to her side, about eleven inches above her keel. He looked again, and gave a loud hurrah. "Barnacles! barnacles!" he cried. "I see them sticking."

He leaned over, and, with some difficulty, detached one, and held it up.

It was not a barnacle, but a curious oblong shell-fish, open at one end.

At sight of this, the wounded forgot their wounds, and leaned over the boat's side, detaching the shell-fish with their knives. They broke them with the handles of their knives, and devoured the fish. They were as thick as a man's finger, and about an inch long, and as sweet as a nut. It seems that in the long calm these shell-fish had fastened on the boat. More than a hundred of them were taken off her weather-side, and evenly divided.

Miss Rolleston, at Hazel's earnest request, ate only six, and these very slowly, and laid the rest by. But the sailors could not restrain themselves; and Prince, in particular, gorged himself so fiercely that he turned purple in the face, and began to breathe very hard.

That black speck on the horizon, had grown by noon to a beetle, and by three o'clock to something more like an elephant, and it now diffused itself into a huge black cloud, that gradually overspread the heavens; and, at last, about half-an-hour before sunset, came a peculiar chill, and then, in due course, a drop or two fell upon the parched wretches. They sat, less like animals than like plants, all stretching towards their preserver.

Their eyes were turned up to the clouds, so were their open mouths, and their arms and hands held up towards it.

The drops increased in number, and praise went up to heaven in return.

Patter, patter, patter; down came a shower, a rain—a heavy, steady rain.

With cries of joy, they put out every vessel to catch it; they lowered the sail, and putting ballast in the centre, bellied it into a great vessel to catch it. They used all their spare canvas to catch it. They filled the water cask with it; they filled the keg that had held the fatal spirit; and all the time they were sucking the wet canvas and their own clothes, and their very hands

and garments on which the life-giving drops kept falling.

Then they set their little sail again, and prayed for land to Him who had sent them wind and rain.

END OF VOL. I.

